THE POEMS OF OSCAR WILDE

OSCAR WILDE

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THE POEMS OF OSCAR WILDE

Oscar Wilde himself placed the sonnet "Hélas" as the foreword to his poems.

HÉLAS!

TO drift with every passion till my soul
Is a stringed lute on which all winds can play,
Is it for this that I have given away
Mine ancient wisdom, and austere control?
Methinks my life is a twice-written scroll
Scrawled over on some boyish holiday
With idle songs for pipe and virelay,
Which do but mar the secret of the whole.
Surely there was a time I might have trod
The sunlit heights, and from life's dissonance
Struck one clear chord to reach the ears of God:
Is that time dead? lo! with a little rod
I did but touch the honey of romance—
And must I lose a soul's inheritance?

"Ravenna" is the poem which won for Oscar Wilde the Newdigate Prize for English Verse.

He had visited Ravenna when in Greece in 1877 and it was from there that he obtained his material and inspiration for the poem.

Newdigate Prize Poem

RAVENNA

Recited in the Sheldonian Theatre

Oxford

June 26th, 1878

BY

OSCAR WILDE

Magdalen College

TO MY FRIEND

GEORGE FLEMING

AUTHOR OF

"THE NILE NOVEL" AND "MIRAGE"

Ravenna, March 1877

Oxford, March 1878

RAVENNA

I

A YEAR ago I breathed the Italian air,—
And yet, methinks this northern Spring
is fair,—
These fields made golden with the flower of March,
The throstle singing on the feathered larch,
The cawing rooks, the wood-doves fluttering by.
The little clouds that race across the sky;
And fair the violet's gentle drooping head,
The primrose, pale for love uncomforted,
The rose that burgeons on the climbing briar,
The crocus-bed, (that seems a moon of fire
Round-girdled with a purple marriage-ring);
And all the flowers of our English Spring,
Fond snowdrops, and the bright-starred daffodil.
Up starts the lark beside the murmuring mill,
And breaks the gossamer-threads of early dew;
And down the river, like a flame of blue,
Keen as an arrow flies the water-king,
While the brown linnets in the greenwood sing.

A year ago!—it seems a little time
Since last I saw that lordly southern clime,
Where flower and fruit to purple radiance blow,
And like bright lamps the fabled apples glow.
Full Spring it was—and by rich flowering vines,
Dark olive-groves and noble forest-pines,
I rode at will; the moist glad air was sweet,
The white road rang beneath my horse's feet,
And musing on Ravenna's ancient name,
I watched the day till, marked with wounds of flame,
The turquoise sky to burnished gold was turned.

O how my heart with boyish passion burned,
When far away across the sedge and mere
I saw that Holy City rising clear,
Crowned with her crown of towers!—On and on
I galloped, racing with the setting sun,
And ere the crimson after-glow was passed,
I stood within Ravenna's walls at last!

II

HOW strangely still! no sound of life or joy
Startles the air; no laughing shepherd-boy
Pipes on his reed, nor ever through the day
Comes the glad sound of children at their play:
O sad, and sweet, and silent! surely here
A man might dwell apart from troublous fear,
Watching the tide of seasons as they flow
From amorous Spring to Winter's rain and snow,
And have no thought of sorrow;—here, indeed,
Are Lethe's waters, and that fatal weed
Which makes a man forget his fatherland.

Ay! amid lotus-meadows dost thou stand,
Like Proserpine, with poppy-laden head,
Guarding the holy ashes of the dead.
For though thy brood of warrior sons hath ceased,
Thy noble dead are with thee!—they at least
Are faithful to thine honour:—guard them well,
O childless city! for a mighty spell,
To wake men's hearts to dreams of things sublime,
Are the lone tombs where rest the Great of Time.

III

YON lonely pillar, rising on the plain,
Marks where the bravest knight of France
was slain,—
The Prince of chivalry, the Lord of war,
Gaston de Foix: for some untimely star
Led him against thy city, and he fell,
As falls some forest-lion fighting well.
Taken from life while life and love were new,
He lies beneath God's seamless veil of blue;
Tall lance-like reeds wave sadly o'er his head,
And oleanders bloom to deeper red,
Where his bright youth flowed crimson on
the ground.

Look farther north unto that broken mound,—
There, prisoned now within a lordly tomb
Raised by a daughter's hand, in lonely gloom,
Huge-limbed Theodoric, the Gothic king,
Sleeps after all his weary conquering.
Time hath not spared his ruin,—wind and rain
Have broken down his stronghold; and again
We see that Death is mighty lord of all,
And king and clown to ashen dust must fall.

Mighty indeed *their* glory! yet to me
Barbaric king, or knight of chivalry,
Or the great queen herself, were poor and vain,
Beside the grave where Dante rests from pain.
His gilded shrine lies open to the air;
And cunning sculptor's hands have carven there
The calm white brow, as calm as earliest morn,
The eyes that flashed with passionate love and scorn,
The lips that sang of Heaven and of Hell,
The almond-face which Giotto drew so well,
The weary face of Dante;—to this day,
Here in his place of resting, far away
From Arno's yellow waters, rushing down
Through the wide bridges of that fairy town,
Where the tall tower of Giotto seems to rise
A marble lily under sapphire skies!
Alas! my Dante! thou hast known the pain
Of meaner lives,—the exile's galling chain,
How steep the stairs within kings' houses are,
And all the petty miseries which mar
Man's nobler nature with the sense of wrong.
Yet this dull world is grateful for thy song;
Our nations do thee homage,—even she,
That cruel queen of vine-clad Tuscany,
Who bound with crown of thorns thy living brow,
Hath decked thine empty tomb with laurels now,
And begs in vain the ashes of her son.

O mightiest exile! all thy grief is done:
Thy soul walks now beside thy Beatrice;
Ravenna guards thine ashes: sleep in peace.

IV

HOW lone this palace is; how grey the walls!
No minstrel now wakes echoes in these halls.
The broken chain lies rusting on the door,
And noisome weeds have split the marble floor:
Here lurks the snake, and here the lizards run
By the stone lions blinking in the sun.
Byron dwelt here in love and revelry
For two long years—a second Anthony,
Who of the world another Actium made!
Yet suffered not his royal soul to fade,
Or lyre to break, or lance to grow less keen,
'Neath any wiles of an Egyptian queen.
For from the East there came a mighty cry,
And Greece stood up to fight for Liberty,
And called him from Ravenna: never knight
Rode forth more nobly to wild scenes of fight!
None fell more bravely on ensanguined field,
Borne like a Spartan back upon his shield!
O Hellas! Hellas! in thine hour of pride,
Thy day of might, remember him who died
To wrest from off thy limbs the trammelling chain:
O Salamis! O lone Platæan plain!
O tossing waves of wild Eubœan sea!
O wind-swept heights of lone Thermopylæ!

He loved you well—ay, not alone in word,
Who freely gave to thee his lyre and sword,
Like Æschylos at well-fought Marathon:

And England, too, shall glory in her son,
Her warrior-poet, first in song and fight.
No longer now shall Slander's venomed spite
Crawl like a snake across his perfect name,
Or mar the lordly scutcheon of his fame.

For as the olive-garland of the race,
Which lights with joy each eager runner's face,
As the red cross which saveth men in war,
As a flame-bearded beacon seen from far
By mariners upon a storm-tossed sea,—
Such was his love for Greece and Liberty!

Byron, thy crowns are ever fresh and green:
Red leaves of rose from Sapphic Mitylene
Shall bind thy brows; the myrtle blooms for thee,
In hidden glades by lonely Castaly;
The laurels wait thy coming: all are thine,
And round thy head one perfect wreath will twine.

V

THE pine-tops rocked before the evening breeze
With the hoarse murmur of the wintry seas,
And the tall stems were streaked with amber bright;—
I wandered through the wood in wild delight,
Some startled bird, with fluttering wings and fleet,
Made snow of all the blossoms; at my feet,
Like silver crowns, the pale narcissi lay,
And small birds sang on every twining spray.
O waving trees, O forest liberty!
Within your haunts at least a man is free,
And half forgets the weary world of strife:
The blood flows hotter, and a sense of life
Wakes i' the quickening veins, while once again
The woods are filled with gods we fancied slain.
Long time I watched, and surely hoped to see
Some goat-foot Pan make merry minstrelsy
Amid the reeds! some startled Dryad-maid
In girlish flight! or lurking in the glade,
The soft brown limbs, the wanton treacherous face
Of woodland god! Queen Dian in the chase,
White-limbed and terrible, with look of pride,
And leash of boar-hounds leaping at her side!
Or Hylas mirrored in the perfect stream.

O idle heart! O fond Hellenic dream!
Ere long, with melancholy rise and swell,
The evening chimes, the convent's vesper-bell,

Struck on mine ears amid the amorous flowers.
Alas! alas! these sweet and honied hours
Had whelmed my heart like some encroaching sea,
And drowned all thoughts of black Gethsemane.

VI

O LONE Ravenna! many a tale is told
Of thy great glories in the days of old:
Two thousand years have passed since thou didst see
Cæsar ride forth to royal victory.
Mighty thy name when Rome's lean eagles flew
From Britain's isles to far Euphrates blue;
And of the peoples thou wast noble queen,
Till in thy streets the Goth and Hun were seen.
Discrowned by man, deserted by the sea,
Thou sleepest, rocked in lonely misery!
No longer now upon thy swelling tide,
Pine-forest-like, thy myriad galleys ride!
For where the brass-beaked ships were wont to float,
The weary shepherd pipes his mournful note;
And the white sheep are free to come and go
Where Adria's purple waters used to flow.

O fair! O sad! O Queen uncomforted!
In ruined loveliness thou liest dead,
Alone of all thy sisters; for at last
Italia's royal warrior hath passed

Rome's lordliest entrance, and hath worn his crown
In the high temples of the Eternal Town!
The Palatine hath welcomed back her king,
And with his name the seven mountains ring!

And Naples hath outlived her dream of pain,
And mocks her tyrant! Venice lives again,
New risen from the waters! and the cry
Of Light and Truth, of Love and Liberty,
Is heard in lordly Genoa, and where
The marble spires of Milan wound the air,
Rings from the Alps to the Sicilian shore,
And Dante's dream is now a dream no more.

But thou, Ravenna, better loved than all,
Thy ruined palaces are but a pall
That hides thy fallen greatness! and thy name
Burns like a grey and flickering candle-flame,
Beneath the noonday splendour of the sun
Of new Italia! for the night is done,
The night of dark oppression, and the day
Hath dawned in passionate splendour: far away
The Austrian hounds are hunted from the land,
Beyond those ice-crowned citadels which stand
Girdling the plain of royal Lombardy,
From the far West unto the Eastern sea.

I know, indeed, that sons of thine have died
In Lissa's waters, by the mountain-side
Of Aspromonte, on Novara's plain,—
Nor have thy children died for thee in vain:

And yet, methinks, thou hast not drunk this wine
From grapes new-crushed of Liberty divine,
Thou hast not followed that immortal Star
Which leads the people forth to deeds of war.
Weary of life, thou liest in silent sleep,
As one who marks the lengthening shadows creep,
Careless of all the hurrying hours that run,
Mourning some day of glory, for the sun
Of Freedom hath not shewn to thee his face,
And thou hast caught no flambeau in the race.

Yet wake not from thy slumbers,—rest thee well,
Amidst thy fields of amber asphodel,
Thy lily-sprinkled meadows,—rest thee there,
To mock all human greatness: who would dare
To vent the paltry sorrows of his life
Before thy ruins, or to praise the strife
Of kings' ambition, and the barren pride
Of warring nations! wert not thou the Bride
Of the wild Lord of Adria's stormy sea!
The Queen of double Empires! and to thee
Were not the nations given as thy prey!
And now—thy gates lie open night and day,
The grass grows green on every tower and hall,
The ghastly fig hath cleft thy bastioned wall;
And where thy mailèd warriors stood at rest
The midnight owl hath made her secret nest.
O fallen! fallen! from thy high estate,
O city trammelled in the toils of Fate,
Doth nought remain of all thy glorious days,
But a dull shield, a crown of withered bays!

Yet who beneath this night of wars and fears,
From tranquil tower can watch the coming years;
Who can foretell what joys the day shall bring,
Or why before the dawn the linnets sing?
Thou, even thou, mayst wake, as wakes the rose
To crimson splendour from its grave of snows;
As the rich corn-fields rise to red and gold
From these brown lands, now stiff with Winter's cold;
As from the storm-rack comes a perfect star!

O much-loved city! I have wandered far
From the wave-circled islands of my home,
Have seen the gloomy mystery of the Dome
Rise slowly from the drear Campagna's way,
Clothed in the royal purple of the day:
I from the city of the violet crown
Have watched the sun by Corinth's hill go down,
And marked the 'myriad laughter' of the sea
From starlit hills of flower-starred Arcady;
Yet back to thee returns my perfect love,
As to its forest-nest the evening dove.

O poet's city! one who scarce has seen
Some twenty summers cast their doublets green,
For Autumn's livery, would seek in vain
To wake his lyre to sing a louder strain,
Or tell thy days of glory;—poor indeed
Is the low murmur of the shepherd's reed,
Where the loud clarion's blast should shake the sky,
And flame across the heavens! and to try

Such lofty themes were folly: yet I know
That never felt my heart a nobler glow
Than when I woke the silence of thy street
With clamorous trampling of my horse's feet,
And saw the city which now I try to sing,
After long days of weary travelling.

VII

ADIEU, Ravenna! but a year ago,
I stood and watched the crimson sunset glow
From the lone chapel on thy marshy plain:
The sky was as a shield that caught the stain
Of blood and battle from the dying sun,
And in the west the circling clouds had spun
A royal robe, which some great God might wear,
While into ocean-seas of purple air
Sank the gold galley of the Lord of Light.

Yet here the gentle stillness of the night
Brings back the swelling tide of memory,
And wakes again my passionate love for thee:
Now is the Spring of Love, yet soon will come
On meadow and tree the Summer's lordly bloom;
And soon the grass with brighter flowers will blow,
And send up lilies for some boy to mow.
Then before long the Summer's conqueror,
Rich Autumn-time, the season's usurer,
Will lend his hoarded gold to all the trees,
And see it scattered by the spendthrift breeze;
And after that the Winter cold and drear.
So runs the perfect cycle of the year.

And so from youth to manhood do we go,
And fall to weary days and locks of snow.
Love only knows no winter; never dies:
Nor cares for frowning storms or leaden skies.
And mine for thee shall never pass away,
Though my weak lips may falter in my lay.

Adieu! Adieu! yon silent evening star,
The night's ambassador, doth gleam afar,
And bid the shepherd bring his flocks to fold.
Perchance before our inland seas of gold
Are garnered by the reapers into sheaves,
Perchance before I see the Autumn leaves,
I may behold thy city; and lay down
Low at thy feet the poet's laurel crown.

Adieu! Adieu! yon silver lamp, the moon,
Which turns our midnight into perfect noon,
Doth surely light thy towers, guarding well
Where Dante sleeps, where Byron loved to dwell.

ELEUTHERIA

SONNET TO LIBERTY

NOT that I love thy children, whose dull eyes
See nothing save their own unlovely woe,
Whose minds know nothing, nothing care to know,—
But that the roar of thy Democracies,
Thy reigns of Terror, thy great Anarchies,
Mirror my wildest passions like the sea
And give my rage a brother——! Liberty!
For this sake only do thy dissonant cries
Delight my discreet soul, else might all kings
By bloody knout or treacherous cannonades
Rob nations of their rights inviolate
And I remain unmoved—and yet, and yet,
These Christs that die upon the barricades,
God knows it I am with them, in some things.

AVE IMPERATRIX

SET in this stormy Northern sea,
Queen of these restless fields of tide,
England! what shall men say of thee,
Before whose feet the worlds divide?

The earth, a brittle globe of glass,
Lies in the hollow of thy hand,
And through its heart of crystal pass,
Like shadows through a twilight land,

The spears of crimson-suited war,
The long white-crested waves of fight,
And all the deadly fires which are
The torches of the lords of Night.

The yellow leopards, strained and lean,
The treacherous Russian knows so well,
With gaping blackened jaws are seen
Leap through the hail of screaming shell.

The strong sea-lion of England's wars
Hath left his sapphire cave of sea,
To battle with the storm that mars
The stars of England's chivalry.

The brazen-throated clarion blows
Across the Pathan's reedy fen,
And the high steeps of Indian snows
Shake to the tread of armèd men.

And many an Afghan chief, who lies
Beneath his cool pomegranate-trees,
Clutches his sword in fierce surmise
When on the mountain-side he sees

The fleet-foot Marri scout, who comes
To tell how he hath heard afar
The measured roll of English drums
Beat at the gates of Kandahar.

For southern wind and east wind meet
Where, girt and crowned by sword and fire,
England with bare and bloody feet
Climbs the steep road of wide empire.

O lonely Himalayan height,
Grey pillar of the Indian sky,
Where saw'st thou last in clanging flight
Our wingèd dogs of Victory?

The almond-groves of Samarcand,
Bokhara, where red lilies blow,
And Oxus, by whose yellow sand
The grave white-turbaned merchants go:

And on from thence to Ispahan,
The gilded garden of the sun,
Whence the long dusty caravan
Brings cedar wood and vermilion;

And that dread city of Cabool
Set at the mountain's scarpèd feet,
Whose marble tanks are ever full
With water for the noonday heat:

Where through the narrow straight Bazaar
A little maid Circassian
Is led, a present from the Czar
Unto some old and bearded khan,—

Here have our wild war-eagles flown,
And flapped wide wings in fiery fight;
But the sad dove, that sits alone
In England—she hath no delight.

In vain the laughing girl will lean
To greet her love with love-lit eyes:
Down in some treacherous black ravine,
Clutching his flag, the dead boy lies.

And many a moon and sun will see
The lingering wistful children wait
To climb upon their father's knee;
And in each house made desolate

Pale women who have lost their lord
Will kiss the relics of the slain—
Some tarnished epaulette—some sword—
Poor toys to soothe such anguished pain.

For not in quiet English fields
Are these, our brothers, lain to rest,
Where we might deck their broken shields
With all the flowers the dead love best.

For some are by the Delhi walls,
And many in the Afghan land,
And many where the Ganges falls
Through seven mouths of shifting sand.

And some in Russian waters lie,
And others in the seas which are
The portals to the East, or by
The wind-swept heights of Trafalgar.

O wandering graves! O restless sleep!
O silence of the sunless day!
O still ravine! O stormy deep!
Give up your prey! Give up your prey!

And thou whose wounds are never healed,
Whose weary race is never won,
O Cromwell's England! must thou yield
For every inch of ground a son?

Go! crown with thorns thy gold-crowned head,
  Change thy glad song to song of pain;
Wind and wild wave have got thy dead,
  And will not yield them back again.

Wave and wild wind and foreign shore
  Possess the flower of English land—
Lips that thy lips shall kiss no more,
  Hands that shall never clasp thy hand.

What profit now that we have bound
  The whole round world with nets of gold,
If hidden in our heart is found
  The care that groweth never old?

What profit that our galleys ride,
  Pine-forest-like, on every main?
Ruin and wreck are at our side,
  Grim warders of the House of pain.

Where are the brave, the strong, the fleet?
  Where is our English chivalry?
Wild grasses are their burial-sheet,
  And sobbing waves their threnody.

O loved ones lying far away,
  What word of love can dead lips send!
O wasted dust! O senseless clay!
  Is this the end! is this the end!

Peace, peace! we wrong the noble dead
To vex their solemn slumber so;
Though childless, and with thorn-crowned head,
Up the steep road must England go,

Yet when this fiery web is spun,
Her watchmen shall descry from far
The young Republic like a sun
Rise from these crimson seas of war.

TO MILTON

MILTON! I think thy spirit hath passed away
From these white cliffs and high-embattled towers;
This gorgeous fiery-coloured world of ours
Seems fallen into ashes dull and grey,
And the age changed unto a mimic play
Wherein we waste our else too-crowded hours
For all our pomp and pageantry and powers
We are but fit to delve the common clay,
Seeing this little isle on which we stand,
This England, this sea-lion of the sea,
By ignorant demagogues is held in fee,
Who love her not: Dear God! is this the land
Which bare a triple empire in her hand
When Cromwell spake the word Democracy!

LOUIS NAPOLEON

EAGLE of Austerlitz! where were thy wings
When far away upon a barbarous strand,
In fight unequaled, by an obscure hand,
Fell the last scion of thy brood of Kings!

Poor boy! thou shalt not flaunt thy cloak of red,
Or ride in state through Paris in the van
Of thy returning legions, but instead
Thy mother France, free and republican,

Shall on thy dead and crownless forehead place
The better laurels of a soldier's crown,
That not dishonoured should thy soul go down
To tell the mighty Sire of thy race

That France hath kissed the mouth of Liberty,
And found it sweeter than his honied bees,
And that the giant wave Democracy
Breaks on the shores where Kings lay crouched at ease.

SONNET

ON THE MASSACRE OF THE CHRISTIANS IN BULGARIA

CHRIST, dost thou live indeed? or are thy bones
Still straitened in their rock-hewn sepulchre?
And was thy Rising only dreamed by Her
Whose love of thee for all her sin atones?
For here the air is horrid with men's groans,
The priests who call upon thy name are slain,
Dost thou not hear the bitter wail of pain
From those whose children lie upon the stones?
Come down, O Son of God! incestuous gloom
Curtains the land, and through the starless night
Over thy Cross a Crescent moon I see!
If thou in very truth didst burst the tomb
Come down, O Son of Man! and show thy might,
Lest Mahomet be crowned instead of Thee!

QUANTUM MUTATA

THERE was a time in Europe long ago
When no man died for freedom anywhere,
But England's lion leaping from its lair
Laid hands on the oppressor! it was so
While England could a great Republic show.
Witness the men of Piedmont, chiefest care
Of Cromwell, when with impotent despair
The Pontiff in his painted portico
Trembled before our stern ambassadors.
How comes it then that from such high estate
We have thus fallen, save that Luxury
With barren merchandise piles up the gate
Where noble thoughts and deeds should enter by:
Else might we still be Milton's heritors.

LIBERTATIS SACRA FAMES

ALBEIT nurtured in democracy,
And liking best that state republican
Where every man is Kinglike and no man
Is crowned above his fellows, yet I see,
Spite of this modern fret for Liberty,
Better the rule of One, whom all obey,
Than to let clamorous demagogues betray
Our freedom with the kiss of anarchy.
Wherefore I love them not whose hands profane
Plant the red flag upon the piled-up street
For no right cause, beneath whose ignorant reign
Arts, Culture, Reverence, Honour, all things fade,
Save Treason and the dagger of her trade,
Or Murder with his silent bloody feet.

THEORETIKOS

THIS mighty empire hath but feet of clay:
Of all its ancient chivalry and might
Our little island is forsaken quite:
Some enemy hath stolen its crown of bay,
And from its hills that voice hath passed away
Which spake of Freedom: O come out of it,
Come out of it, my Soul, thou art not fit
For this vile traffic-house, where day by day
Wisdom and reverence are sold at mart,
And the rude people rage with ignorant cries
Against an heritage of centuries.
It mars my calm: wherefore in dreams of Art
And loftiest culture I would stand apart,
Neither for God, nor for his enemies.

THE GARDEN OF EROS

THE GARDEN OF EROS

IT is full summer now, the heart of June,
Not yet the sunburnt reapers are astir
Upon the upland meadow where too soon
Rich autumn time, the season's usurer,
Will lend his hoarded gold to all the trees,
And see his treasure scattered by the wild and
spendthrift breeze.

Too soon indeed! yet here the daffodil,
That love-child of the Spring, has lingered on
To vex the rose with jealousy, and still
The harebell spreads her azure pavilion,
And like a strayed and wandering reveller
Abandoned of its brothers, whom long since June's
messenger

The missel-thrush has frighted from the glade,
One pale narcissus loiters fearfully
Close to a shadowy nook, where half afraid
Of their own loveliness some violets lie
That will not look the gold sun in the face
For fear of too much splendour,—ah! methinks it
is a place

Which should be trodden by Persephone
When wearied of the flowerless fields of Dis!
Or danced on by the lads of Arcady!
The hidden secret of eternal bliss
Known to the Grecian here a man might find,
Ah! you and I may find it now if Love and Sleep be kind.

There are the flowers which mourning Herakles
Strewed on the tomb of Hylas, columbine,
Its white doves all a-flutter where the breeze
Kissed them too harshly, the small celandine,
That yellow-kirtled chorister of eve,
And lilac lady's-smock,—but let them bloom alone, and leave

Yon spirèd hollyhock red-crocketed
To sway its silent chimes, else must the bee,
Its little bellringer, go seek instead
Some other pleasaunce; the anemone
That weeps at daybreak, like a silly girl
Before her love, and hardly lets the butterflies unfurl

Their painted wings beside it,—bid it pine
In pale virginity; the winter snow
Will suit it better than those lips of thine
Whose fires would but scorch it, rather go
And pluck that amorous flower which blooms alone,
Fed by the pander wind with dust of kisses not its own.

The trumpet-mouths of red convolvulus
So dear to maidens, creamy meadow-sweet
Whiter than Juno's throat and odorous
As all Arabia, hyacinths the feet
Of Huntress Dian would be loth to mar
For any dappled fawn,—pluck these, and those fond flowers which are

Fairer than what Queen Venus trod upon
Beneath the pines of Ida, eucharis,
That morning star which does not dread the sun,
And budding marjoram which but to kiss
Would sweeten Cytheræa's lips and make
Adonis jealous,—these for thy head,—and for thy girdle take

Yon curving spray of purple clematis
Whose gorgeous dye outflames the Tyrian King,
And foxgloves with their nodding chalices,
But that one narciss which the startled Spring
Let from her kirtle fall when first she heard
In her own woods the wild tempestuous song of summer's bird,

Ah! leave it for a subtle memory
Of those sweet tremulous days of rain and sun,
When April laughed between her tears to see
The early primrose with shy footsteps run
From the gnarled oak-tree roots till all the wold,
Spite of its brown and trampled leaves, grew bright with shimmering gold.

Nay, pluck it too, it is not half so sweet
As thou thyself, my soul's idolatry!
And when thou art a-wearied at thy feet
Shall oxlips weave their brightest tapestry,
For thee the woodbine shall forget its pride
And veil its tangled whorls, and thou shalt walk
on daisies pied.

And I will cut a reed by yonder spring
And make the wood-gods jealous, and old Pan
Wonder what young intruder dares to sing
In these still haunts, where never foot of man
Should tread at evening, lest he chance to spy
The marble limbs of Artemis and all her company.

And I will tell thee why the jacinth wears
Such dread embroidery of dolorous moan,
And why the hapless nightingale forbears
To sing her song at noon, but weeps alone
When the fleet swallow sleeps, and rich men feast,
And why the laurel trembles when she sees the
lightening east.

And I will sing how sad Proserpina
Unto a grave and gloomy Lord was wed,
And lure the silver-breasted Helena
Back from the lotus meadows of the dead,
So shalt thou see that awful loveliness
For which two mighty Hosts met fearfully in
war's abyss!

And then I'll pipe to thee that Grecian tale
How Cynthia loves the lad Endymion,
And hidden in a grey and misty veil
Hies to the cliffs of Latmos once the Sun
Leaps from his ocean bed in fruitless chase
Of those pale flying feet which fade away in his embrace.

And if my flute can breathe sweet melody,
We may behold Her face who long ago
Dwelt among men by the Ægean sea,
And whose sad house with pillaged portico
And friezeless wall and columns toppled down
Looms o'er the ruins of that fair and violet-cinctured town.

Spirit of Beauty! tarry still awhile,
They are not dead, thine ancient votaries,
Some few there are to whom thy radiant smile
Is better than a thousand victories,
Though all the nobly slain of Waterloo
Rise up in wrath against them! tarry still, there are a few

Who for thy sake would give their manlihood
And consecrate their being, I at least
Have done so, made thy lips my daily food,
And in thy temples found a goodlier feast
Than this starved age can give me, spite of all
Its new-found creeds so sceptical and so dogmatical.

Here not Cephissos, not Ilissos flows,
The woods of white Colonos are not here,
On our bleak hills the olive never blows,
No simple priest conducts his lowing steer
Up the steep marble way, nor through the town
Do laughing maidens bear to thee the crocus-flowered gown.

Yet tarry! for the boy who loved thee best,
Whose very name should be a memory
To make thee linger, sleeps in silent rest
Beneath the Roman walls, and melody
Still mourns her sweetest lyre, none can play
The lute of Adonais, with his lips Song passed away.

Nay, when Keats died the Muses still had left
One silver voice to sing his threnody,
But ah! too soon of it we were bereft
When on that riven night and stormy sea
Panthea claimed her singer as her own,
And slew the mouth that praised her; since which time we walk alone,

Save for that fiery heart, that morning star
Of re-arisen England, whose clear eye
Saw from our tottering throne and waste of war
The grand Greek limbs of young Democracy
Rise mightily like Hesperus and bring
The great Republic! him at least thy love hath taught to sing,

And he hath been with thee at Thessaly,
  And seen white Atalanta fleet of foot
In passionless and fierce virginity
  Hunting the tuskèd boar, his honied lute
Hath pierced the cavern of the hollow hill,
And Venus laughs to know one knee will bow
    before her still.

And he hath kissed the lips of Proserpine,
  And sung the Galilæan's requiem,
That wounded forehead dashed with blood and
    wine
  He hath discrowned, the Ancient Gods in him
Have found their last, most ardent worshipper,
And the new Sign grows grey and dim before its
    conqueror.

Spirit of Beauty! tarry with us still,
  It is not quenched the torch of poesy,
The star that shook above the Eastern hill
  Holds unassailed its argent armoury
From all the gathering gloom and fretful fight—
O tarry with us still! for through the long and
    common night,

Morris, our sweet and simple Chaucer's child,
  Dear heritor of Spenser's tuneful reed,
With soft and sylvan pipe has oft beguiled
  The weary soul of man in troublous need,
And from the far and flowerless fields of ice
Has brought fair flowers to make an earthly
    paradise.

We know them all, Gudrun the strong men's
bride,
Aslaug and Olafson we know them all,
How giant Grettir fought and Sigurd died,
And what enchantment held the king in thrall
When lonely Brynhild wrestled with the powers
That war against all passion, ah! how oft through
summer hours,

Long listless summer hours when the noon
Being enamoured of a damask rose
Forgets to journey westward, till the moon
The pale usurper of its tribute grows
From a thin sickle to a silver shield
And chides its loitering car—how oft, in some cool
grassy field

Far from the cricket-ground and noisy eight,
At Bagley, where the rustling bluebells come
Almost before the blackbird finds a mate
And overstay the swallow, and the hum
Of many murmuring bees flits through the leaves,
Have I lain poring on the dreamy tales his fancy
weaves,

And through their unreal woes and mimic pain
Wept for myself, and so was purified,
And in their simple mirth grew glad again;
For as I sailed upon that pictured tide
The strength and splendour of the storm was mine
Without the storm's red ruin, for the singer is
divine,

The little laugh of water falling down
Is not so musical, the clammy gold
Close hoarded in the tiny waxen town
Has less of sweetness in it, and the old
Half-withered reeds that waved in Arcady
Touched by his lips break forth again to fresher harmony.

Spirit of Beauty, tarry yet awhile!
Although the cheating merchants of the mart
With iron roads profane our lovely isle,
And break on whirling wheels the limbs of Art,
Ay! though the crowded factories beget
The blindworm Ignorance that slays the soul, O tarry yet!

For One at least there is,—He bears his name
From Dante and the seraph Gabriel,—
Whose double laurels burn with deathless flame
To light thine altar; He too loves thee well,
Who saw old Merlin lured in Vivien's snare,
And the white feet of angels coming down the golden stair,

Loves thee so well, that all the World for him
A gorgeous-coloured vestiture must wear,
And Sorrow take a purple diadem,
Or else be no more Sorrow and Despair,
Gild its own thorns, and Pain, like Adon, be even in
Anguish beautiful;—such is the empery

Which Painters hold, and such the heritage
  This gentle solemn Spirit doth possess,
Being a better mirror of his age
  In all his pity, love, and weariness,
Than those who can but copy common things,
And leave the Soul unpainted with its mighty
  questionings.

But they are few, and all romance has flown,
  And men can prophesy about the sun,
And lecture on his arrows—how, alone,
  Through a waste void the soulless atoms run,
How from each tree its weeping nymph has fled,
And that no more 'mid English reeds a Naïad
  shows her head.

Methinks these new Actæons boast too soon
  That they have spied on beauty; what if we
Have analysed the rainbow, robbed the moon
  Of her most ancient, chastest mystery,
Shall I, the last Endymion, lose all hope
Because rude eyes peer at my mistress through a
  telescope!

What profit if this scientific age
  Burst through our gates with all its retinue
Of modern miracles! Can it assuage
One lover's breaking heart? what can it do
To make one life more beautiful, one day
More godlike in its period? but now the Age
  of Clay

Returns in horrid cycle, and the earth
Hath borne again a noisy progeny
Of ignorant Titans, whose ungodly birth
Hurls them against the august hierarchy
Which sat upon Olympus, to the Dust
They have appealed, and to that barren arbiter they must

Repair for judgment, let them, if they can
From Natural Warfare and insensate Chance,
Create the new Ideal rule for man!
Methinks that was not my inheritance;
For I was nurtured otherwise, my soul
Passes from higher heights of life to a more supreme goal.

Lo! while we spake the earth did turn away
Her visage from the God, and Hecate's boat
Rose silver-laden, till the jealous day
Blew all its torches out: I did not note
The waning hours, to young Endymions
Time's palsied fingers count in vain his rosary of suns!

Mark how the yellow iris wearily
Leans back its throat, as though it would be kissed
By its false chamberer, the dragon-fly,
Who, like a blue vein on a girl's white wrist
Sleeps on that snowy primrose of the night,
Which 'gins to flush with crimson shame, and die beneath the light.

Come let us go, against the pallid shield
  Of the wan sky the almond blossoms gleam,
The corncrake nested in the unmown field
  Answers its mate, across the misty stream
On fitful wing the startled curlews fly,
And in his sedgy bed the lark, for joy that Day
    is nigh,

Scatters the pearlèd dew from off the grass,
  In tremulous ecstasy to greet the sun,
Who soon in gilded panoply will pass
  Forth from yon orange-curtained pavilion
Hung in the burning east, see, the red rim
O'ertops the expectant hills! it is the God! for
    love of him

Already the shrill lark is out of sight,
  Flooding with waves of song this silent dell,—
Ah! there is something more in that bird's flight
  Than could be tested in a crucible!—
But the air freshens, let us go, why soon
The woodmen will be here; how we have lived
    this night of June!

ROSA MYSTICA

REQUIESCAT

TREAD lightly, she is near
Under the snow,
Speak gently, she can hear
The daisies grow.

All her bright golden hair
Tarnished with rust,
She that was young and fair
Fallen to dust.

Lily-like, white as snow,
She hardly knew
She was a woman, so
Sweetly she grew.

Coffin-board, heavy stone,
Lie on her breast,
I vex my heart alone,
She is at rest.

Peace, Peace, she cannot hear
Lyre or sonnet,
All my life's buried here,
Heap earth upon it.

AVIGNON.

SONNET ON APPROACHING ITALY

I REACHED the Alps: the soul within me burned,
Italia, my Italia, at thy name:
And when from out the mountain's heart I came
And saw the land for which my life had yearned,
I laughed as one who some great prize had earned:
And musing on the marvel of thy fame
I watched the day, till marked with wounds of flame
The turquoise sky to burnished gold was turned.
The pine-trees waved as waves a woman's hair,
And in the orchards every twining spray
Was breaking into flakes of blossoming foam:
But when I knew that far away at Rome
In evil bonds a second Peter lay,
I wept to see the land so very fair.

TURIN.

SAN MINIATO

SEE, I have climbed the mountain side
Up to this holy house of God,
Where once that Angel-Painter trod
Who saw the heavens opened wide,

And throned upon the crescent moon
The Virginal white Queen of Grace,—
Mary! could I but see thy face
Death could not come at all too soon.

O crowned by God with thorns and pain
Mother of Christ! O mystic wife!
My heart is weary of this life
And over-sad to sing again.

O crowned by God with love and flame!
O crowned by Christ the Holy One!
O listen ere the searching sun
Show to the world my sin and shame.

AVE MARIA GRATIA PLENA

WAS this His coming! I had hoped to see
A scene of wondrous glory, as was told
Of some great God who in a rain of gold
Broke open bars and fell on Danae:
Or a dread vision as when Semele
Sickening for love and unappeased desire
Prayed to see God's clear body, and the fire
Caught her brown limbs and slew her utterly:
With such glad dreams I sought this holy place,
And now with wondering eyes and heart I stand
Before this supreme mystery of Love:
Some kneeling girl with passionless pale face,
An angel with a lily in his hand,
And over both the white wings of a Dove.

FLORENCE.

ITALIA

ITALIA! thou art fallen, though with sheen
Of battle-spears thy clamorous armies stride
From the north Alps to the Sicilian tide!
Ay! fallen, though the nations hail thee Queen
Because rich gold in every town is seen,
And on thy sapphire-lake in tossing pride
Of wind-filled vans thy myriad galleys ride
Beneath one flag of red and white and green.
O Fair and Strong! O Strong and Fair in vain!
Look southward where Rome's desecrated town
Lies mourning for her God-anointed King!
Look heaven-ward! shall God allow this thing?
Nay! but some flame-girt Raphael shall come down,
And smite the Spoiler with the sword of pain.

VENICE.

SONNET

WRITTEN IN HOLY WEEK AT GENOA

I WANDERED through Scoglietto's far retreat,
The oranges on each o'erhanging spray
Burned as bright lamps of gold to shame the day;
Some startled bird with fluttering wings and fleet
Made snow of all the blossoms, at my feet
Like silver moons the pale narcissi lay:
And the curved waves that streaked the great green bay
Laughed i' the sun, and life seemed very sweet.
Outside the young boy-priest passed singing clear,
'Jesus the son of Mary has been slain,
O come and fill his sepulchre with flowers.'
Ah, God! Ah, God! those dear Hellenic hours
Had drowned all memory of Thy bitter pain,
The Cross, the Crown, the Soldiers and the Spear.

ROME UNVISITED

I

THE corn has turned from grey to red,
Since first my spirit wandered forth,
From the drear cities of the north,
And to Italia's mountains fled.

And here I set my face towards home,
For all my pilgrimage is done,
Although, methinks, yon blood-red sun
Marshals the way to Holy Rome.

O Blessed Lady, who dost hold
Upon the seven hills thy reign!
O Mother without blot or stain,
Crowned with bright crowns of triple gold!

O Roma, Roma, at thy feet
I lay this barren gift of song!
For, ah! the way is steep and long
That leads unto thy sacred street.

II

AND yet what joy it were for me
To turn my feet unto the south,
And journeying towards the Tiber mouth
To kneel again at Fiesole!

And wandering through the tangled pines
That break the gold of Arno's stream,
To see the purple mist and gleam
Of morning on the Apennines.

By many a vineyard-hidden home,
Orchard and olive-garden grey,
Till from the drear Campagna's way
The seven hills bear up the dome!

III

A PILGRIM from the northern seas—
What joy for me to seek alone
The wondrous Temple and the throne
Of Him who holds the awful keys!

When, bright with purple and with gold,
Come priest and holy Cardinal,
And borne above the heads of all
The gentle Shepherd of the Fold.

O joy to see before I die
The only God-anointed King,
And hear the silver trumpets ring
A triumph as He passes by!

Or at the brazen-pillared shrine
Holds high the mystic sacrifice,
And shows his God to human eyes
Beneath the veil of bread and wine.

IV

FOR lo, what changes time can bring!
The cycles of revolving years
May free my heart from all its fears,
And teach my lips a song to sing.

Before yon field of trembling gold
Is garnered into dusty sheaves,
Or ere the autumn's scarlet leaves
Flutter as birds adown the wold,

I may have run the glorious race,
And caught the torch while yet aflame,
And called upon the holy name
Of Him who now doth hide His face.

URBS SACRA ÆTERNA

ROME! what a scroll of History thine has been;
In the first days thy sword republican
Ruled the whole world for many an age's span:
Then of the peoples wert thou royal Queen,
Till in thy streets the bearded Goth was seen;
And now upon thy walls the breezes fan
(Ah, city crowned by God, discrowned by man!)
The hated flag of red and white and green.
When was thy glory! when in search for power
Thine eagles flew to greet the double sun,
And the wild nations shuddered at thy rod?
Nay, but thy glory tarried for this hour,
When pilgrims kneel before the Holy One,
The prisoned shepherd of the Church of God.

MONTE MARIO.

SONNET

ON HEARING THE DIES IRÆ SUNG IN THE SISTINE CHAPEL

NAY, Lord, not thus! white lilies in the spring,
Sad olive-groves, or silver-breasted dove,
Teach me more clearly of Thy life and love
Than terrors of red flame and thundering.
The hillside vines dear memories of Thee bring:
A bird at evening flying to its nest
Tells me of One who had no place of rest:
I think it is of Thee the sparrows sing.
Come rather on some autumn afternoon,
When red and brown are burnished on the leaves,
And the fields echo to the gleaner's song,
Come when the splendid fulness of the moon
Looks down upon the rows of golden sheaves,
And reap Thy harvest: we have waited long.

EASTER DAY

THE silver trumpets rang across the Dome:
The people knelt upon the ground with awe:
And borne upon the necks of men I saw,
Like some great God, the Holy Lord of Rome.
Priest-like, he wore a robe more white than foam,
And, king-like, swathed himself in royal red,
Three crowns of gold rose high upon his head:
In splendour and in light the Pope passed home.
My heart stole back across wide wastes of years
To one who wandered by a lonely sea,
And sought in vain for any place of rest:
'Foxes have holes, and every bird its nest.
I, only I, must wander wearily,
And bruise my feet, and drink wine salt with tears.'

E TENEBRIS

COME down, O Christ, and help me! reach thy hand,
For I am drowning in a stormier sea
Than Simon on thy lake of Galilee:
The wine of life is spilt upon the sand,
My heart is as some famine-murdered land
Whence all good things have perished utterly,
And well I know my soul in Hell must lie
If I this night before God's throne should stand.
'He sleeps perchance, or rideth to the chase,
Like Baal, when his prophets howled that name
From morn to noon on Carmel's smitten height.'
Nay, peace, I shall behold, before the night,
The feet of brass, the robe more white than flame,
The wounded hands, the weary human face.

VITA NUOVA

I STOOD by the unvintageable sea
Till the wet waves drenched face and hair with spray,
The long red fires of the dying day
Burned in the west; the wind piped drearily;
And to the land the clamorous gulls did flee:
'Alas!' I cried, 'my life is full of pain,
And who can garner fruit or golden grain
From these waste fields which travail ceaselessly!'
My nets gaped wide with many a break and flaw,
Nathless I threw them as my final cast
Into the sea, and waited for the end.
When lo! a sudden glory! and I saw
From the black waters of my tortured past
The argent splendour of white limbs ascend!

MADONNA MIA

A LILY-GIRL, not made for this world's pain,
With brown, soft hair close braided by her ears,
And longing eyes half veiled by slumberous tears
Like bluest water seen through mists of rain:
Pale cheeks whereon no love hath left its stain,
Red underlip drawn in for fear of love,
And white throat, whiter than the silvered dove,
Through whose wan marble creeps one purple vein,
Yet, though my lips shall praise her without cease,
Even to kiss her feet I am not bold,
Being o'ershadowed by the wings of awe,
Like Dante, when he stood with Beatrice
Beneath the flaming Lion's breast, and saw
The seventh Crystal, and the Stair of Gold.

THE NEW HELEN

WHERE hast thou been since round the walls of Troy
The sons of God fought in that great emprise?
Why dost thou walk our common earth again?
Hast thou forgotten that impassioned boy,
His purple galley and his Tyrian men
And treacherous Aphrodite's mocking eyes?
For surely it was thou, who, like a star
Hung in the silver silence of the night,
Didst lure the Old World's chivalry and might
Into the clamorous crimson waves of war!

Or didst thou rule the fire-laden moon?
In amorous Sidon was thy temple built
Over the light and laughter of the sea?
Where, behind lattice scarlet-wrought and gilt,
Some brown-limbed girl did weave thee tapestry,
All through the waste and wearied hours of noon;
Till her wan cheek with flame of passion burned,
And she rose up the sea-washed lips to kiss
Of some glad Cyprian sailor, safe returned
From Calpé and the cliffs of Herakles!

No! thou art Helen, and none other one!
It was for thee that young Sarpedôn died,
And Memnôn's manhood was untimely spent;
It was for thee gold-crested Hector tried
With Thetis' child that evil race to run,
In the last year of thy beleaguerment;
Ay! even now the glory of thy fame
Burns in those fields of trampled asphodel,
Where the high lords whom Ilion knew so well
Clash ghostly shields, and call upon thy name.

Where hast thou been? in that enchanted land
Whose slumbering vales forlorn Calypso knew,
Where never mower rose at break of day
But all unswathed the trammelling grasses grew,
And the sad shepherd saw the tall corn stand
Till summer's red had changed to withered grey?
Didst thou lie there by some Lethæan stream
Deep brooding on thine ancient memory,
The crash of broken spears, the fiery gleam
From shivered helm, the Grecian battle-cry?

Nay, thou wert hidden in that hollow hill
With one who is forgotten utterly,
That discrowned Queen men call the Erycine;
Hidden away that never mightst thou see
The face of Her, before whose mouldering shrine
To-day at Rome the silent nations kneel;
Who gat from Love no joyous gladdening,
But only Love's intolerable pain,
Only a sword to pierce her heart in twain,
Only the bitterness of child-bearing.

The lotus-leaves which heal the wounds of Death
Lie in thy hand; O, be thou kind to me,
While yet I know the summer of my days;
For hardly can my tremulous lips draw breath
To fill the silver trumpet with thy praise,
So bowed am I before thy mystery;
So bowed and broken on Love's terrible wheel,
That I have lost all hope and heart to sing,
Yet care I not what ruin time may bring
If in thy temple thou wilt let me kneel.

Alas, alas, thou wilt not tarry here,
But, like that bird, the servant of the sun,
Who flies before the north wind and the night,
So wilt thou fly our evil land and drear,
Back to the tower of thine old delight,
And the red lips of young Euphorion;
Nor shall I ever see thy face again,
But in this poisonous garden-close must stay,
Crowning my brows with the thorn-crown of pain,
Till all my loveless life shall pass away.

O Helen! Helen! Helen! yet a while,
Yet for a little while, O, tarry here,
Till the dawn cometh and the shadows flee!
For in the gladsome sunlight of thy smile
Of heaven or hell I have no thought or fear,
Seeing I know no other god but thee:
No other god save him, before whose feet
In nets of gold the tired planets move,
The incarnate spirit of spiritual love
Who in thy body holds his joyous seat.

Thou wert not born as common women are!
But, girt with silver splendour of the foam,
Didst from the depths of sapphire seas arise!
And at thy coming some immortal star,
Bearded with flame, blazed in the Eastern skies,
And waked the shepherds on thine island home.
Thou shalt not die: no asps of Egypt creep
Close at thy heels to taint the delicate air;
No sullen-blooming poppies stain thy hair,
Those scarlet heralds of eternal sleep.

Lily of love, pure and inviolate!
Tower of ivory! red rose of fire!
Thou hast come down our darkness to illume:
For we, close-caught in the wide nets of Fate,
Wearied with waiting for the World's Desire,
Aimlessly wandered in the House of gloom,
Aimlessly sought some slumberous anodyne
For wasted lives, for lingering wretchedness,
Till we beheld thy re-arisen shrine,
And the white glory of thy loveliness.

THE BURDEN OF ITYS

THE BURDEN OF ITYS

THIS English Thames is holier far than Rome,
Those harebells like a sudden flush of sea
Breaking across the woodland, with the foam
Of meadow-sweet and white anemone
To fleck their blue waves,—God is likelier there
Than hidden in that crystal-hearted star the pale
monks bear!

Those violet-gleaming butterflies that take
Yon creamy lily for their pavilion
Are monsignores, and where the rushes shake
A lazy pike lies basking in the sun,
His eyes half shut,—He is some mitred old
Bishop *in partibus!* look at those gaudy scales all
green and gold.

The wind the restless prisoner of the trees
Does well for Palæstrina, one would say
The mighty master's hands were on the keys
Of the Maria organ, which they play
When early on some sapphire Easter morn
In a high litter as red as blood or sin the Pope is
borne

From his dark House out to the Balcony
Above the bronze gates and the crowded square,
Whose very fountains seem for ecstasy
To toss their silver lances in the air,
And stretching out weak hands to East and West
In vain sends peace to peaceless lands, to restless nations rest.

Is not yon lingering orange after-glow
That stays to vex the moon more fair than all
Rome's lordliest pageants! strange, a year ago
I knelt before some crimson Cardinal
Who bare the Host across the Esquiline,
And now—those common poppies in the wheat seem twice as fine.

The blue-green beanfields yonder, tremulous
With the last shower, sweeter perfume bring
Through this cool evening than the odorous
Flame-jewelled censers the young deacons swing,
When the grey priest unlocks the curtained shrine,
And makes God's body from the common fruit of corn and vine.

Poor Fra Giovanni bawling at the mass
Were out of tune now, for a small brown bird
Sings overhead, and through the long cool grass
I see that throbbing throat which once I heard
On starlit hills of flower-starred Arcady,
Once where the white and crescent sand of Salamis meets sea.

Sweet is the swallow twittering on the eaves
At daybreak, when the mower whets his scythe,
And stock-doves murmur, and the milkmaid leaves
Her little lonely bed, and carols blithe
To see the heavy-lowing cattle wait
Stretching their huge and dripping mouths across
the farmyard gate.

And sweet the hops upon the Kentish leas,
And sweet the wind that lifts the new-mown
hay,
And sweet the fretful swarms of grumbling bees
That round and round the linden blossoms play;
And sweet the heifer breathing in the stall,
And the green bursting figs that hang upon the
red-brick wall.

And sweet to hear the cuckoo mock the spring
While the last violet loiters by the well,
And sweet to hear the shepherd Daphnis sing
The song of Linus through a sunny dell
Of warm Arcadia where the corn is gold
And the slight lithe-limbed reapers dance about
the wattled fold.

And sweet with young Lycoris to recline
In some Illyrian valley far away,
Where canopied on herbs amaracine
We too might waste the summer-trancèd day
Matching our reeds in sportive rivalry,
While far beneath us frets the troubled purple of
the sea.

But sweeter far if silver-sandalled foot
  Of some long-hidden God should ever tread
The Nuneham meadows, if with reeded flute
  Pressed to his lips some Faun might raise his head
By the green water-flags, ah! sweet indeed
To see the heavenly herdsman call his white-fleeced flock to feed.

Then sing to me thou tuneful chorister,
  Though what thou sing'st be thine own requiem!
Tell me thy tale thou hapless chronicler
  Of thine own tragedies! do not contemn
These unfamiliar haunts, this English field,
For many a lovely coronal our northern isle can yield

Which Grecian meadows know not, many a rose
  Which all day long in vales Æolian
A lad might seek in vain for over-grows
  Our hedges like a wanton courtesan
Unthrifty of its beauty, lilies too
Ilissus never mirrored star our streams, and cockles blue

Dot the green wheat which, though they are the signs
  For swallows going south, would never spread
Their azure tents between the Attic vines;
  Even that little weed of ragged red,
Which bids the robin pipe, in Arcady
Would be a trespasser, and many ar unsung elegy

Sleeps in the reeds that fringe our winding Thames
  Which to awake were sweeter ravishment
Than ever Syrinx wept for, diadems
  Of brown bee-studded orchids which were meant
For Cytheræa's brows are hidden here
Unknown to Cytheræa, and by yonder pasturing
    steer

There is a tiny yellow daffodil,
  The butterfly can see it from afar,
Although one summer evening's dew could fill
  Its little cup twice over ere the star
Had called the lazy shepherd to his fold
And be no prodigal, each leaf is flecked with spotted
    gold

As if Jove's gorgeous leman Danae
  Hot from his gilded arms had stooped to kiss
The trembling petals, or young Mercury
  Low-flying to the dusky ford of Dis
Had with one feather of his pinions
Just brushed them! the slight stem which bears
    the burden of its suns

Is hardly thicker than the gossamer,
  Or poor Arachne's silver tapestry,—
Men say it bloomed upon the sepulchre
  Of One I sometime worshipped, but to me
It seems to bring diviner memories
Of faun-loved Heliconian glades and blue nymph-
    haunted seas,

Of an untrodden vale at Tempe where
On the clear river's marge Narcissus lies,
The tangle of the forest in his hair,
The silence of the woodland in his eyes,
Wooing that drifting imagery which is
No sooner kissed than broken, memories of Salmacis

Who is not boy nor girl and yet is both,
Fed by two fires and unsatisfied
Through their excess, each passion being loth
For love's own sake to leave the other's side
Yet killing love by staying, memories
Of Oreads peeping through the leaves of silent moonlit trees,

Of lonely Ariadne on the wharf
At Naxos, when she saw the treacherous crew
Far out at sea, and waved her crimson scarf
And called false Theseus back again nor knew
That Dionysos on an amber pard
Was close behind her, memories of what Mæonia's bard

With sightless eyes beheld, the wall of Troy,
Queen Helen lying in the ivory room,
And at her side an amorous red-lipped boy
Trimming with dainty hand his helmet's plume,
And far away the moil, the shout, the groan,
As Hector shielded off the spear and Ajax hurled the stone;

Of wingèd Perseus with his flawless sword
Cleaving the snaky tresses of the witch,
And all those tales imperishably stored
In little Grecian urns, freightage more rich
Than any gaudy galleon of Spain
Bare from the Indies ever! these at least bring back again,

For well I know they are not dead at all,
The ancient Gods of Grecian poesy,
They are asleep, and when they hear thee call
Will wake and think 'tis very Thessaly,
This Thames the Daulian waters, this cool glade
The yellow-irised mead where once young Itys laughed and played.

If it was thou dear jasmine-cradled bird
Who from the leafy stillness of thy throne
Sang to the wondrous boy, until he heard
The horn of Atalanta faintly blown
Across the Cumnor hills, and wandering
Through Bagley wood at evening found the Attic poets' spring,—

Ah! tiny sober-suited advocate
That pleadest for the moon against the day!
If thou didst make the shepherd seek his mate
On that sweet questing, when Proserpina
Forgot it was not Sicily and leant
Across the mossy Sandford stile in ravished wonderment,—

Light-winged and bright-eyed miracle of the wood!
If ever thou didst soothe with melody
One of that little clan, that brotherhood
Which loved the morning-star of Tuscany
More than the perfect sun of Raphael
And is immortal, sing to me! for I too love thee well,

Sing on! sing on! let the dull world grow young,
Let elemental things take form again,
And the old shapes of Beauty walk among
The simple garths and open crofts, as when
The son of Leto bare the willow rod,
And the soft sheep and shaggy goats followed the boyish God.

Sing on! sing on! and Bacchus will be here
Astride upon his gorgeous Indian throne,
And over whimpering tigers shake the spear
With yellow ivy crowned and gummy cone,
While at his side the wanton Bassarid
Will throw the lion by the mane and catch the mountain kid!

Sing on! and I will wear the leopard skin,
And steal the moonèd wings of Ashtaroth,
Upon whose icy chariot we could win
Cithæron in an hour ere the froth
Has over-brimmed the wine-vat or the Faun
Ceased from the treading! ay, before the flickering lamp of dawn

Has scared the hooting owlet to its nest,
And warned the bat to close its filmy vans,
Some Mænad girl with vine-leaves on her breast
Will filch their beech-nuts from the sleeping Pans
So softly that the little nested thrush
Will never wake, and then with shrilly laugh and leap will rush

Down the green valley where the fallen dew
Lies thick beneath the elm and count her store,
Till the brown Satyrs in a jolly crew
Trample the loosestrife down along the shore,
And where their hornèd master sits in state
Bring strawberries and bloomy plums upon a wicker crate!

Sing on! and soon with passion-wearied face
Through the cool leaves Apollo's lad will come,
The Tyrian prince his bristled boar will chase
Adown the chestnut-copses all a-bloom,
And ivory-limbed, grey-eyed, with look of pride,
After yon velvet-coated deer the virgin maid will ride.

Sing on! and I the dying boy will see
Stain with his purple blood the waxen bell
That overweighs the jacinth, and to me
The wretched Cyprian her woe will tell,
And I will kiss her mouth and streaming eyes,
And lead her to the myrtle-hidden grove where Adon lies!

Cry out aloud on Itys! memory
That foster-brother of remorse and pain
Drops poison in mine ear,—O to be free,
To burn one's old ships! and to launch again
Into the white-plumed battle of the waves
And fight old Proteus for the spoil of coral-flowered caves!

O for Medea with her poppied spell!
O for the secret of the Colchian shrine!
O for one leaf of that pale asphodel
Which binds the tired brows of Proserpine,
And sheds such wondrous dews at eve that she
Dreams of the fields of Enna, by the far Sicilian sea,

Where oft the golden-girdled bee she chased
From lily to lily on the level mead,
Ere yet her sombre Lord had bid her taste
The deadly fruit of that pomegranate seed,
Ere the black steeds had harried her away
Down to the faint and flowerless land, the sick and sunless day.

O for one midnight and as paramour
The Venus of the little Melian farm!
O that some antique statue for one hour
Might wake to passion, and that I could charm
The Dawn at Florence from its dumb despair,
Mix with those mighty limbs and make that giant breast my lair!

Sing on! sing on! I would be drunk with life,
Drunk with the trampled vintage of my youth,
I would forget the wearying wasted strife,
The riven veil, the Gorgon eyes of Truth,
The prayerless vigil and the cry for prayer,
The barren gifts, the lifted arms, the dull insensate air!

Sing on! sing on! O feathered Niobe,
Thou canst make sorrow beautiful, and steal
From joy its sweetest music, not as we
Who by dead voiceless silence strive to heal
Our too untented wounds, and do but keep
Pain barricadoed in our hearts, and murder pillowed sleep.

Sing louder yet, why must I still behold
The wan white face of that deserted Christ,
Whose bleeding hands my hands did once enfold,
Whose smitten lips my lips so oft have kissed,
And now in mute and marble misery
Sits in his lone dishonoured House and weeps, perchance for me?

O Memory cast down thy wreathèd shell!
Break thy hoarse lute O sad Melpomene!
O Sorrow, Sorrow keep thy cloistered cell
Nor dim with tears this limpid Castaly!
Cease, Philomel, thou dost the forest wrong
To vex its sylvan quiet with such wild impassioned song!

Cease, cease, or if 'tis anguish to be dumb
Take from the pastoral thrush her simpler air,
Whose jocund carelessness doth more become
This English woodland than thy keen despair,
Ah! cease and let the north wind bear thy lay
Back to the rocky hills of Thrace, the stormy
Daulian bay.

A moment more, the startled leaves had stirred,
Endymion would have passed across the mead
Moonstruck with love, and this still Thames had
heard
Pan plash and paddle groping for some reed
To lure from her blue cave that Naiad maid
Who for such piping listens half in joy and half
afraid.

A moment more, the waking dove had cooed,
The silver daughter of the silver sea
With the fond gyves of clinging hands had wooed
Her wanton from the chase, and Dryope
Had thrust aside the branches of her oak
To see the lusty gold-haired lad rein in his snorting yoke.

A moment more, the trees had stooped to kiss
Pale Daphne just awakening from the swoon
Of tremulous laurels, lonely Salmacis
Had bared his barren beauty to the moon,
And through the vale with sad voluptuous smile
Antinous had wandered, the red lotus of the Nile

Down leaning from his black and clustering hair,
To shade those slumberous eyelids' caverned bliss,
Or else on yonder grassy slope with bare
High-tuniced limbs unravished Artemis
Had bade her hounds give tongue, and roused the deer
From his green ambuscade with shrill halloo and pricking spear.

Lie still, lie still, O passionate heart, lie still!
O Melancholy, fold thy raven wing!
O sobbing Dryad, from thy hollow hill
Come not with such despondent answering!
No more thou wingèd Marsyas complain,
Apollo loveth not to hear such troubled songs of pain!

It was a dream, the glade is tenantless,
No soft Ionian laughter moves the air,
The Thames creeps on in sluggish leadenness,
And from the copse left desolate and bare
Fled is young Bacchus with his revelry,
Yet still from Nuneham wood there comes that thrilling melody

So sad, that one might think a human heart
Brake in each separate note, a quality
Which music sometimes has, being the Art
Which is most nigh to tears and memory,
Poor mourning Philomel, what dost thou fear?
Thy sister doth not haunt these fields, Pandion is not here,

Here is no cruel Lord with murderous blade,
No woven web of bloody heraldries,
But mossy dells for roving comrades made,
Warm valleys where the tired student lies
With half-shut book, and many a winding walk
Where rustic lovers stray at eve in happy simple talk.

The harmless rabbit gambols with its young
Across the trampled towing-path, where late
A troop of laughing boys in jostling throng
Cheered with their noisy cries the racing eight;
The gossamer, with ravelled silver threads,
Works at its little loom, and from the dusky red-eaved sheds

Of the lone Farm a flickering light shines out
Where the swinked shepherd drives his bleating flock
Back to their wattled sheep-cotes, a faint shout
Comes from some Oxford boat at Sandford lock.
And starts the moor-hen from the sedgy rill,
And the dim lengthening shadows flit like swallows up the hill.

The heron passes homeward to the mere,
The blue mist creeps among the shivering trees,
Gold world by world the silent stars appear,
And like a blossom blown before the breeze
A white moon drifts across the shimmering sky,
Mute arbitress of all thy sad, thy rapturous threnody.

She does not heed thee, wherefore should she heed,
  She knows Endymion is not far away,
'Tis I, 'tis I, whose soul is as the reed
  Which has no message of its own to play,
So pipes another's bidding, it is I,
Drifting with every wind on the wide sea of misery.

Ah! the brown bird has ceased: one exquisite trill
  About the sombre woodland seems to cling
Dying in music, else the air is still,
  So still that one might hear the bat's small wing.
Wander and wheel above the pines, or tell
Each tiny dew-drop dripping from the bluebell's
    brimming cell.

And far away across the lengthening wold,
  Across the willowy flats and thickets brown,
Magdalen's tall tower tipped with tremulous gold
  Marks the long High Street of the little town,
And warns me to return; I must not wait,
Hark! 'tis the curfew booming from the bell at
    Christ Church gate.

WIND FLOWERS

IMPRESSION DU MATIN

THE Thames nocturne of blue and gold
Changed to a Harmony in grey:
A barge with ochre-coloured hay
Dropt from the wharf: and chill and cold

The yellow fog came creeping down
The bridges, till the houses' walls
Seemed changed to shadows and St. Paul's
Loomed like a bubble o'er the town.

Then suddenly arose the clang
Of waking life; the streets were stirred
With country waggons: and a bird
Flew to the glistening roofs and sang.

But one pale woman all alone,
The daylight kissing her wan hair,
Loitered beneath the gas lamps' flare,
With lips of flame and heart of stone.

MAGDALEN WALKS

THE little white clouds are racing over the sky,
And the fields are strewn with the gold of the flower of March,
The daffodil breaks under foot, and the tasselled larch
Sways and swings as the thrush goes hurrying by.

A delicate odour is borne on the wings of the morning breeze,
The odour of deep wet grass, and of brown new-furrowed earth,
The birds are singing for joy of the Spring's glad birth,
Hopping from branch to branch on the rocking trees.

And all the woods are alive with the murmur and sound of Spring,
And the rose-bud breaks into pink on the climbing briar,
And the crocus-bed is a quivering moon of fire
Girdled round with the belt of an amethyst ring.

And the plane of the pine-tree is whispering some tale of love
Till it rustles with laughter and tosses its mantle of green,
And the gloom of the wych-elm's hollow is lit with the iris sheen
Of the burnished rainbow throat and the silver breast of a dove.

See! the lark starts up from his bed in the meadow there,
Breaking the gossamer threads and the nets of dew,
And flashing adown the river, a flame of blue!
The kingfisher flies like an arrow, and wounds the air.

And the sense of my life is sweet! though I know that the end is nigh:
For the ruin and rain of winter will shortly come,
The lily will lose its gold, and the chestnut-bloom
In billows of red and white on the grass will lie.

And even the light of the sun will fade at the last,
And the leaves will fall, and the birds will hasten away,
And I will be left in the snow of a flowerless day
To think on the glories of Spring, and the joys of a youth long past.

Yet be silent, my heart! do not count it a profitless thing
To have seen the splendour of the sun, and of grass, and of flower!
To have lived and loved! for I hold that to love for an hour
Is better for man and woman than cycles of blossoming Spring.

ATHANASIA

TO that gaunt House of Art which lacks for naught
Of all the great things men have saved from Time,
The withered body of a girl was brought
Dead ere the world's glad youth had touched its prime,
And seen by lonely Arabs lying hid
In the dim womb of some black pyramid.

But when they had unloosed the linen band
Which swathed the Egyptian's body,—lo! was found
Closed in the wasted hollow of her hand
A little seed, which sown in English ground
Did wondrous snow of starry blossoms bear
And spread rich odours through our spring-time air.

With such strange arts this flower did allure
That all forgotten was the asphodel,
And the brown bee, the lily's paramour,
Forsook the cup where he was wont to dwell,
For not a thing of earth it seemed to be,
But stolen from some heavenly Arcady.

In vain the sad narcissus, wan and white
  At its own beauty, hung across the stream,
The purple dragon-fly had no delight
  With its gold dust to make his wings a-gleam,
Ah! no delight the jasmine-bloom to kiss,
Or brush the rain-pearls from the eucharis.

For love of it the passionate nightingale
  Forgot the hills of Thrace, the cruel king,
And the pale dove no longer cared to sail
  Through the wet woods at time of blossoming,
But round this flower of Egypt sought to float,
With silvered wing and amethystine throat.

While the hot sun blazed in his tower of blue
  A cooling wind crept from the land of snows,
And the warm south with tender tears of dew
  Drenched its white leaves when Hesperos up-rose
Amid those sea-green meadows of the sky
On which the scarlet bars of sunset lie.

But when o'er wastes of lily-haunted field
  The tired birds had stayed their amorous tune,
And broad and glittering like an argent shield
  High in the sapphire heavens hung the moon,
Did no strange dream or evil memory make
Each tremulous petal of its blossoms shake?

Ah no! to this bright flower a thousand years
Seemed but the lingering of a summer's day,
It never knew the tide of cankering fears
Which turn a boy's gold hair to withered grey,
The dread desire of death it never knew,
Or how all folk that they were born must rue.

For we to death with pipe and dancing go,
Nor would we pass the ivory gate again,
As some sad river wearied of its flow
Through the dull plains, the haunts of common men,
Leaps lover-like into the terrible sea!
And counts it gain to die so gloriously.

We mar our lordly strength in barren strife
With the world's legions led by clamorous care,
It never feels decay but gathers life
From the pure sunlight and the supreme air,
We live beneath Time's wasting sovereignty,
It is the child of all eternity.

The woes of man may serve an idle lay,
Nor were it hard fond hearers to enthral,
Telling how Egypt's glory passed away,
How London from its pinnacle must fall;
But this white flower, the conqueror of time,
Seems all too great for any boyish rhyme.

SERENADE

(FOR MUSIC)

THE western wind is blowing fair
Across the dark Ægean sea,
And at the secret marble stair
My Tyrian galley waits for thee.
Come down! the purple sail is spread,
The watchman sleeps within the town.
O leave thy lily-flowered bed,
O Lady mine come down, come down!

She will not come, I know her well,
Of lover's vows she hath no care,
And little good a man can tell
Of one so cruel and so fair.
True love is but a woman's toy,
They never know the lover's pain,
And I who loved as loves a boy
Must love in vain, must love in vain.

O noble pilot, tell me true,
Is that the sheen of golden hair?
Or is it but the tangled dew
That binds the passion-flowers there?
Good sailor come and tell me now
Is that my Lady's lily hand?
Or is it but the gleaming prow,
Or is it but the silver sand?

No! no! 'tis not the tangled dew,
'Tis not the silver-fretted sand,
It is my own dear Lady true
With golden hair and lily hand!
O noble pilot, steer for Troy,
Good sailor, ply the labouring oar,
This is the Queen of life and joy
Whom we must bear from Grecian shore!

The waning sky grows faint and blue,
It wants an hour still of day,
Aboard! aboard! my gallant crew,
O Lady mine, away! away!
O noble pilot, steer for Troy,
Good sailor, ply the labouring oar,
O loved as only loves a boy!
O loved for ever evermore!

ENDYMION

(FOR MUSIC)

THE apple trees are hung with gold,
And birds are loud in Arcady,
The sheep lie bleating in the fold,
The wild goat runs across the wold,
But yesterday his love he told,
I know he will come back to me.
O rising moon! O lady moon!
Be you my lover's sentinel,
You cannot choose but know him well,
For he is shod with purple shoon,
You cannot choose but know my love,
For he a shepherd's crook doth bear,
And he is soft as any dove,
And brown and curly is his hair.

The turtle now has ceased to call
Upon her crimson-footed groom,
The grey wolf prowls about the stall,
The lily's singing seneschal
Sleeps in the lily-bell, and all
The violet hills are lost in gloom.
O risen moon! O holy moon!
Stand on the top of Helice,
And if my own true love you see,
Ah! if you see the purple shoon,

The hazel crook, the lad's brown hair,
  The goat-skin wrapped about his arm,
Tell him that I am waiting where
  The rushlight glimmers in the Farm.

The falling dew is cold and chill,
  And no bird sings in Arcady,
The little fauns have left the hill,
Even the tired daffodil
Has closed its gilded doors, and still
  My lover comes not back to me.
False moon! False moon! O waning moon!
  Where is my own true lover gone,
  Where are the lips vermilion,
The shepherd's crook, the purple shoon?
Why spread that silver pavilion,
  Why wear that veil of drifting mist?
Ah! thou hast young Endymion,
  Thou hast the lips that should be kissed!

LA BELLA DONNA DELLA MIA MENTE

MY limbs are wasted with a flame,
My feet are sore with travelling,
For, calling on my Lady's name,
My lips have now forgot to sing.

O Linnet in the wild-rose brake
Strain for my Love thy melody,
O Lark sing louder for love's sake,
My gentle Lady passeth by.

O almond-blossoms bend adown
Until ye reach her drooping head;
O twining branches weave a crown
Of apple-blossoms white and red.

She is too fair for any man
To see or hold his heart's delight,
Fairer than Queen or courtesan
Or moon-lit water in the night.

Her hair is bound with myrtle leaves,
(Green leaves upon her golden hair!)
Green grasses through the yellow sheaves
Of autumn corn are not more fair.

Her little lips, more made to kiss
Than to cry bitterly for pain,
Are tremulous as brook-water is,
Or roses after evening rain.

Her neck is like white melilote
Flushing for pleasure of the sun,
The throbbing of the linnet's throat
Is not so sweet to look upon.

As a pomegranate, cut in twain,
White-seeded, is her crimson mouth,
Her cheeks are as the fading stain
Where the peach reddens to the south.

O twining hands! O delicate
White body made for love and pain!
O House of Love! O desolate
Pale flower beaten by the rain!

God can bring Winter unto May,
And change the sky to flame and blue,
Or summer corn to gold from grey:
One thing alone He cannot do.

He cannot change my love to hate,
Or make thy face less fair to see,
Though now He knocketh at the gate
With life and death—for you and me.

CHANSON

A RING of gold and a milk-white dove
Are goodly gifts for thee,
And a hempen rope for your own love
To hang upon a tree.

For you a House of Ivory,
(Roses are white in the rose-bower)!
A narrow bed for me to lie,
(White, O white, is the hemlock flower)!

Myrtle and jessamine for you,
(O the red rose is fair to see)!
For me the cypress and the rue,
(Fairest of all is rosemary)!

For you three lovers of your hand,
(Green grass where a man lies dead)!
For me three paces on the sand,
(Plant lilies at my head)!

CHARMIDES

CHARMIDES

I

HE was a Grecian lad, who coming home
With pulpy figs and wine from Sicily
Stood at his galley's prow, and let the foam
Blow through his crisp brown curls unconsciously,
And holding wave and wind in boy's despite
Peered from his dripping seat across the wet and stormy night

Till with the dawn he saw a burnished spear
Like a thin thread of gold against the sky,
And hoisted sail, and strained the creaking gear,
And bade the pilot head her lustily
Against the nor'west gale, and all day long
Held on his way, and marked the rowers' time with measured song,

And when the faint Corinthian hills were red
Dropped anchor in a little sandy bay,
And with fresh boughs of olive crowned his head,
And brushed from cheek and throat the hoary spray,
And washed his limbs with oil, and from the hold
Brought out his linen tunic and his sandals brazen-soled,

And a rich robe stained with the fishes' juice
  Which of some swarthy trader he had bought
Upon the sunny quay at Syracuse,
  And was with Tyrian broideries inwrought,
And by the questioning merchants made his way
Up through the soft and silver woods, and when
    the labouring day

Had spun its tangled web of crimson cloud,
  Clomb the high hill, and with swift silent feet
Crept to the fane unnoticed by the crowd
  Of busy priests, and from some dark retreat
Watched the young swains his frolic playmates
    bring
The firstling of their little flock, and the shy
    shepherd fling

The crackling salt upon the flame, or hang
  His studded crook against the temple wall
To Her who keeps away the ravenous fang
  Of the base wolf from homestead and from stall:
And then the clear-voiced maidens 'gan to sing,
And to the altar each man brought some goodly
    offering,

A beechen cup brimming with milky foam,
  A fair cloth wrought with cunning imagery
Of hounds in chase, a waxen honey-comb
  Dripping with oozy gold which scarce the bee
Had ceased from building, a black skin of oil
Meet for the wrestlers, a great boar the fierce and
    white-tusked spoil

Stolen from Artemis that jealous maid
To please Athena, and the dappled hide
Of a tall stag who in some mountain glade
Had met the shaft; and then the herald cried,
And from the pillared precinct one by one
Went the glad Greeks well pleased that they their simple vows had done.

And the old priest put out the waning fires
Save that one lamp whose restless ruby glowed
For ever in the cell, and the shrill lyres
Came fainter on the wind, as down the road
In joyous dance these country folk did pass,
And with stout hands the warder closed the gates of polished brass.

Long time he lay and hardly dared to breathe,
And heard the cadenced drip of spilt-out wine,
And the rose-petals falling from the wreath
As the night breezes wandered through the shrine,
And seemed to be in some entrancèd swoon
Till through the open roof above the full and brimming moon

Flooded with sheeny waves the marble floor,
When from his nook up leapt the venturous lad,
And flinging wide the cedar-carven door
Beheld an awful image saffron-clad
And armed for battle! the gaunt Griffin glared
From the huge helm, and the long lance of wreck and ruin flared

Like a red rod of flame, stony and steeled
The Gorgon's head its leaden eyeballs rolled,
And writhed its snaky horrors through the shield,
And gaped aghast with bloodless lips and cold
In passion impotent, while with blind gaze
The blinking owl between the feet hooted in shrill amaze.

The lonely fisher as he trimmed his lamp
Far out at sea off Sunium, or cast
The net for tunnies, heard a brazen tramp
Of horses smite the waves, and a wild blast
Divide the folded curtains of the night,
And knelt upon the little poop, and prayed in holy fright.

And guilty lovers in their venery
Forgat a little while their stolen sweets,
Deeming they heard dread Dian's bitter cry;
And the grim watchmen on their lofty seats
Ran to their shields in haste precipitate,
Or strained black-bearded throats across the dusky parapet.

For round the temple rolled the clang of arms,
And the twelve Gods leapt up in marble fear,
And the air quaked with dissonant alarums
Till huge Poseidon shook his mighty spear,
And on the frieze the prancing horses neighed,
And the low tread of hurrying feet rang from the cavalcade.

Ready for death with parted lips he stood,
And well content at such a price to see
That calm wide brow, that terrible maidenhood,
The marvel of that pitiless chastity,
Ah! well content indeed, for never wight
Since Troy's young shepherd prince had seen so wonderful a sight.

Ready for death he stood, but lo! the air
Grew silent, and the horses ceased to neigh,
And off his brow he tossed the clustering hair,
And from his limbs he threw the cloak away,
For whom would not such love make desperate,
And nigher came, and touched her throat, and with hands violate

Undid the cuirass, and the crocus gown,
And bared the breasts of polished ivory,
Till from the waist the peplos falling down
Left visible the secret mystery
Which to no lover will Athena show,
The grand cool flanks, the crescent thighs, the bossy hills of snow.

Those who have never known a lover's sin
Let them not read my ditty, it will be
To their dull ears so musicless and thin
That they will have no joy in it, but ye
To whose wan cheeks now creeps the lingering smile,
Ye who have learned who Eros is,—O listen yet awhile.

A little space he let his greedy eyes
Rest on the burnished image, till mere sight
Half swooned for surfeit of such luxuries,
And then his lips in hungering delight
Fed on her lips, and round the towered neck
He flung his arms, nor cared at all his passion's will to check.

Never I ween did lover hold such tryst,
For all night long he murmured honeyed word,
And saw her sweet unravished limbs, and kissed
Her pale and argent body undisturbed,
And paddled with the polished throat, and pressed
His hot and beating heart upon her chill and icy breast.

It was as if Numidian javelins
Pierced through and through his wild and whirling brain,
And his nerves thrilled like throbbing violins
In exquisite pulsation, and the pain
Was such sweet anguish that he never drew
His lips from hers till overhead the lark of warning flew.

They who have never seen the daylight peer
Into a darkened room, and drawn the curtain,
And with dull eyes and wearied from some dear
And worshipped body risen, they for certain
Will never know of what I try to sing,
How long the last kiss was, how fond and late his lingering.

The moon was girdled with a crystal rim,
The sign which shipmen say is ominous
Of wrath in heaven, the wan stars were dim,
And the low lightening east was tremulous
With the faint fluttering wings of flying dawn,
Ere from the silent sombre shrine this lover had withdrawn.

Down the steep rock with hurried feet and fast
Clomb the brave lad, and reached the cave of Pan,
And heard the goat-foot snoring as he passed,
And leapt upon a grassy knoll and ran
Like a young fawn unto an olive wood
Which in a shady valley by the well-built city stood.

And sought a little stream, which well he knew,
For oftentimes with boyish careless shout
The green and crested grebe he would pursue,
Or snare in woven net the silver trout,
And down amid the startled reeds he lay
Panting in breathless sweet affright, and waited for the day.

On the green bank he lay, and let one hand
Dip in the cool dark eddies listlessly,
And soon the breath of morning came and fanned
His hot flushed cheeks, or lifted wantonly
The tangled curls from off his forehead, while
He on the running water gazed with strange and secret smile.

And soon the shepherd in rough woollen cloak
With his long crook undid the wattled cotes,
And from the stack a thin blue wreath of smoke
Curled through the air across the ripening oats,
And on the hill the yellow house-dog bayed
As through the crisp and rustling fern the heavy cattle strayed.

And when the light-foot mower went afield
Across the meadows laced with threaded dew,
And the sheep bleated on the misty weald,
And from its nest the waking corncrake flew,
Some woodmen saw him lying by the stream
And marvelled much that any lad so beautiful could seem,

Nor deemed him born of mortals, and one said,
'It is young Hylas, that false runaway
Who with a Naiad now would make his bed
Forgetting Herakles,' but others, 'Nay,
It is Narcissus, his own paramour,
Those are the fond and crimson lips no woman can allure.'

And when they nearer came a third one cried,
'It is young Dionysos who has hid
His spear and fawnskin by the river side
Weary of hunting with the Bassarid,
And wise indeed were we away to fly
They live not long who on the gods immortal come to spy.'

So turned they back, and feared to look behind,
And told the timid swain how they had seen
Amid the reeds some woodland God reclined,
And no man dared to cross the open green,
And on that day no olive-tree was slain,
No rushes cut, but all deserted was the fair domain,

Save when the neat-herd's lad, his empty pail
Well slung upon his back, with leap and bound
Raced on the other side, and stopped to hail,
Hoping that he some comrade new had found,
And gat no answer, and then half afraid
Passed on his simple way, or down the still and silent glade

A little girl ran laughing from the farm,
Not thinking of love's secret mysteries,
And when she saw the white and gleaming arm
And all his manlihood, with longing eyes
Whose passion mocked her sweet virginity
Watched him awhile, and then stole back sadly and wearily.

Far off he heard the city's hum and noise,
And now and then the shriller laughter where
The passionate purity of brown-limbed boys
Wrestled or raced in the clear healthful air,
And now and then a little tinkling bell
As the shorn wether led the sheep down to the mossy well.

Through the grey willows danced the fretful gnat,
The grasshopper chirped idly from the tree,
In sleek and oily coat the water-rat
Breasting the little ripples manfully
Made for the wild-duck's nest, from bough to bough
Hopped the shy finch, and the huge tortoise crept across the slough.

On the faint wind floated the silky seeds
As the bright scythe swept through the waving grass,
The ousel-cock splashed circles in the reeds
And flecked with silver whorls the forest's glass,
Which scarce had caught again its imagery
Ere from its bed the dusky tench leapt at the dragon-fly.

But little care had he for any thing
Though up and down the beech the squirrel played,
And from the copse the linnet 'gan to sing
To her brown mate her sweetest serenade;
Ah! little care indeed, for he had seen
The breasts of Pallas and the naked wonder of the Queen.

But when the herdsman called his straggling goats
With whistling pipe across the rocky road,
And the shard-beetle with its trumpet-notes
Boomed through the darkening woods, and seemed to bode
Of coming storm, and the belated crane
Passed homeward like a shadow, and the dull big drops of rain

Fell on the pattering fig-leaves, up he rose,
And from the gloomy forest went his way
Past sombre homestead and wet orchard-close,
And came at last unto a little quay,
And called his mates aboard, and took his seat
On the high poop, and pushed from land, and
loosed the dripping sheet,

And steered across the bay, and when nine suns
Passed down the long and laddered way of gold,
And nine pale moons had breathed their orisons
To the chaste stars their confessors, or told
Their dearest secret to the downy moth
That will not fly at noonday, through the foam
and surging froth

Came a great owl with yellow sulphurous eyes
And lit upon the ship, whose timbers creaked
As though the lading of three argosies
Were in the hold, and flapped its wings and
shrieked,
And darkness straightway stole across the deep,
Sheathed was Orion's sword, dread Mars himself
fled down the steep,

And the moon hid behind a tawny mask
Of drifting cloud, and from the ocean's marge
Rose the red plume, the huge and hornèd casque,
The seven-cubit spear, the brazen targe!
And clad in bright and burnished panoply
Athena strode across the stretch of sick and
shivering sea!

To the dull sailors' sight her loosened locks
Seemed like the jagged storm-rack, and her feet
Only the spume that floats on hidden rocks,
And, marking how the rising waters beat
Against the rolling ship, the pilot cried
To the young helmsman at the stern to luff to windward side.

But he, the overbold adulterer,
A dear profaner of great mysteries,
An ardent amorous idolater,
When he beheld those grand relentless eyes
Laughed loud for joy, and crying out 'I come'
Leapt from the lofty poop into the chill and churning foam.

Then fell from the high heaven one bright star,
One dancer left the circling galaxy,
And back to Athens on her clattering car
In all the pride of venged divinity
Pale Pallas swept with shrill and steely clank,
And a few gurgling bubbles rose where her boy lover sank.

And the mast shuddered as the gaunt owl flew
With mocking hoots after the wrathful Queen,
And the old pilot bade the trembling crew
Hoist the big sail, and told how he had seen
Close to the stern a dim and giant form,
And like a dipping swallow the stout ship dashed through the storm.

And no man dared to speak of Charmides
Deeming that he some evil thing had wrought,
And when they reached the strait Symplegades
They beached their galley on the shore, and sought
The toll-gate of the city hastily,
And in the market showed their brown and pictured pottery.

II

BUT some good Triton-god had ruth, and bare
The boy's drowned body back to Grecian land,
And mermaids combed his dank and dripping hair
And smoothed his brow, and loosed his clenching hand,
Some brought sweet spices from far Araby,
And others bade the halcyon sing her softest lullaby.

And when he neared his old Athenian home,
A mighty billow rose up suddenly
Upon whose oily back the clotted foam
Lay diapered in some strange fantasy,
And clasping him unto its glassy breast
Swept landward, like a white-maned steed upon a venturous quest!

Now where Colonos leans unto the sea
There lies a long and level stretch of lawn,
The rabbit knows it, and the mountain bee
For it deserts Hymettus, and the Faun
Is not afraid, for never through the day
Comes a cry ruder than the shout of shepherd lads at play.

But often from the thorny labyrinth
And tangled branches of the circling wood
The stealthy hunter sees young Hyacinth
Hurling the polished disk, and draws his hood
Over his guilty gaze, and creeps away,
Nor dares to wind his horn, or—else at the first break of day

The Dryads come and throw the leathern ball
Along the reedy shore, and circumvent
Some goat-eared Pan to be their seneschal
For fear of bold Poseidon's ravishment,
And loose their girdles, with shy timorous eyes,
Lest from the surf his azure arms and purple beard should rise.

On this side and on that a rocky cave,
Hung with the yellow-belled laburnum, stands,
Smooth is the beach, save where some ebbing wave
Leaves its faint outline etched upon the sands,
As though it feared to be too soon forgot
By the green rush, its playfellow,—and yet, it is a spot

So small, that the inconstant butterfly
  Could steal the hoarded honey from each flower
Ere it was noon, and still not satisfy
  Its over-greedy love,—within an hour
A sailor boy, were he but rude enow
To land and pluck a garland for his galley's painted
    prow,

Would almost leave the little meadow bare,
  For it knows nothing of great pageantry,
Only a few narcissi here and there
  Stand separate in sweet austerity,
Dotting the un-mown grass with silver stars,
And here and there a daffodil waves tiny scimitars.

Hither the billow brought him, and was glad
  Of such dear servitude, and where the land
Was virgin of all waters laid the lad
  Upon the golden margent of the strand,
And like a lingering lover oft returned
To kiss those pallid limbs which once with intense
    fire burned,

Ere the wet seas had quenched that holocaust,
  That self-fed flame, that passionate lustihead,
Ere grisly death with chill and nipping frost
  Had withered up those lilies white and red
Which, while the boy would through the forest
    range,
Answered each other in a sweet antiphonal
    counter-change.

And when at dawn the wood-nymphs, hand-in-hand,
Threaded the bosky dell, their satyr spied
The boy's pale body stretched upon the sand,
And feared Poseidon's treachery, and cried,
And like bright sunbeams flitting through a glade
Each startled Dryad sought some safe and leafy ambuscade,

Save one white girl, who deemed it would not be
So dread a thing to feel a sea-god's arms
Crushing her breasts in amorous tyranny,
And longed to listen to those subtle charms
Insidious lovers weave when they would win
Some fencèd fortress, and stole back again, nor thought it sin

To yield her treasure unto one so fair,
And lay beside him, thirsty with love's drouth,
Called him soft names, played with his tangled hair,
And with hot lips made havoc of his mouth
Afraid he might not wake, and then afraid
Lest he might wake too soon, fled back, and then, fond renegade,

Returned to fresh assault, and all day long
Sat at his side, and laughed at her new toy,
And held his hand, and sang her sweetest song,
Then frowned to see how froward was the boy
Who would not with her maidenhood entwine,
Nor knew that three days since his eyes had looked on Proserpine,

Nor knew what sacrilege his lips had done,
But said, 'He will awake, I know him well,
He will awake at evening when the sun
Hangs his red shield on Corinth's citadel,
This sleep is but a cruel treachery
To make me love him more, and in some cavern
of the sea

Deeper than ever falls the fisher's line
Already a huge Triton blows his horn,
And weaves a garland from the crystalline
And drifting ocean-tendrils to adorn
The emerald pillars of our bridal bed,
For sphered in foaming silver, and with coral-
crownèd head,

We two will sit upon a throne of pearl,
And a blue wave will be our canopy,
And at our feet the water-snakes will curl
In all their amethystine panoply
Of diamonded mail, and we will mark
The mullets swimming by the mast of some storm-
foundered bark,

Vermilion-finned with eyes of bossy gold
Like flakes of crimson light, and the great deep
His glassy-portaled chamber will unfold,
And we will see the painted dolphins sleep
Cradled by murmuring halcyons on the rocks
Where Proteus in quaint suit of green pastures
his monstrous flocks.

And tremulous opal-hued anemones
Will wave their purple fringes where we tread
Upon the mirrored floor, and argosies
Of fishes flecked with tawny scales will thread
The drifting cordage of the shattered wreck,
And honey-coloured amber beads our twining limbs will deck.'

But when that baffled Lord of War the Sun
With gaudy pennon flying passed away
Into his brazen House, and one by one
The little yellow stars began to stray
Across the field of heaven, ah! then indeed
She feared his lips upon her lips would never care to feed,

And cried, 'Awake, already the pale moon
Washes the trees with silver, and the wave
Creeps grey and chilly up this sandy dune,
The croaking frogs are out, and from the cave
The night-jar shrieks, the fluttering bats repass,
And the brown stoat with hollow flanks creeps through the dusky grass.

Nay, though thou art a God, be not so coy,
For in yon stream there is a little reed
That often whispers how a lovely boy
Lay with her once upon a grassy mead,
Who when his cruel pleasure he had done
Spread wings of rustling gold and soared aloft into the sun.

Be not so coy, the laurel trembles still
With great Apollo's kisses, and the fir
Whose clustering sisters fringe the seaward hill
Hath many a tale of that bold ravisher
Whom men call Boreas, and I have seen
The mocking eyes of Hermes through the poplar's
silvery sheen.

Even the jealous Naiads call me fair,
And every morn a young and ruddy swain
Woos me with apples and with locks of hair,
And seeks to soothe my virginal disdain
By all the gifts the gentle wood-nymphs love;
But yesterday he brought to me an iris-plumaged
dove

With little crimson feet, which with its store
Of seven spotted eggs the cruel lad
Had stolen from the lofty sycamore
At daybreak, when her amorous comrade had
Flown off in search of berried juniper
Which most they love; the fretful wasp, that
earliest vintager

Of the blue grapes, hath not persistency
So constant as this simple shepherd-boy
For my poor lips, his joyous purity
And laughing sunny eyes might well decoy
A Dryad from her oath to Artemis;
For very beautiful is he, his mouth was made to
kiss,

His argent forehead, like a rising moon
  Over the dusky hills of meeting brows,
Is crescent shaped, the hot and Tyrian noon
  Leads from the myrtle-grove no goodlier spouse
For Cytheræa, the first silky down
Fringes his blushing cheeks, and his young limbs
    are strong and brown:

And he is rich, and fat and fleecy herds
  Of bleating sheep upon his meadows lie,
And many an earthen bowl of yellow curds
  Is in his homestead for the thievish fly
To swim and drown in, the pink clover mead
Keeps its sweet store for him, and he can pipe on
    oaten reed.

And yet I love him not, for it was for thee
  I kept my love, I knew that thou would'st come
To rid me of this pallid chastity;
  Thou fairest flower of the flowerless foam
Of all the wide Ægean, brightest star
Of ocean's azure heavens where the mirrored
    planets are!

I knew that thou would'st come, for when at first
  The dry wood burgeoned, and the sap of Spring
Swelled in my green and tender bark or burst
  To myriad multitudinous blossoming
Which mocked the midnight with its mimic moons
That did not dread the dawn, and first the thrushes'
    rapturous tunes

Startled the squirrel from its granary,
And cuckoo flowers fringed the narrow lane,
Through my young leaves a sensuous ecstasy
Crept like new wine, and every mossy vein
Throbbed with the fitful pulse of amorous blood,
And the wild winds of passion shook my slim
stem's maidenhood.

The trooping fawns at evening came and laid
Their cool black noses on my lowest boughs,
And on my topmost branch the blackbird made
A little nest of grasses for his spouse,
And now and then a twittering wren would light
On a thin twig which hardly bare the weight of
such delight.

I was the Attic shepherd's trysting place,
Beneath my shadow Amaryllis lay,
And round my trunk would laughing Daphnis
chase
The timorous girl, till tired out with play
She felt his hot breath stir her tangled hair,
And turned, and looked, and fled no more from
such delightful snare.

Then come away unto my ambuscade
Where clustering woodbine weaves a canopy
For amorous pleasaunce, and the rustling shade
Of Paphian myrtles seems to sanctify
The dearest rites of love, there in the cool
And green recesses of its farthest depth there is
a pool,

The ouzel's haunt, the wild bee's pasturage,
For round its rim great creamy lilies float
Through their flat leaves in verdant anchorage,
Each cup a white-sailed golden-laden boat
Steered by a dragon-fly,—be not afraid
To leave this wan and wave-kissed shore, surely
the place was made

For lovers such as we; the Cyprian Queen,
One arm around her boyish paramour,
Strays often there at eve, and I have seen
The moon strip off her misty vestiture
For young Endymion's eyes; be not afraid,
The panther feet of Dian never tread that secret
glade.

Nay, if thou will'st, back to the beating brine,
Back to the boisterous billow let us go,
And walk all day beneath the hyaline
Huge vault of Neptune's watery portico,
And watch the purple monsters of the deep
Sport in ungainly play, and from his lair keen
Xiphias leap.

For if my mistress find me lying here
She will not ruth or gentle pity show,
But lay her boar-spear down, and with austere
Relentless fingers string the cornel bow,
And draw the feathered notch against her breast,
And loose the archèd cord, ay, even now upon the
quest

I hear her hurrying feet,—awake, awake,
Thou laggard in love's battle! once at least
Let me drink deep of passion's wine, and slake
My parchèd being with the nectarous feast
Which even Gods affect! O come, Love, come,
Still we have time to reach the cavern of thine
azure home.'

Scarce had she spoken when the shuddering trees
Shook, and the leaves divided, and the air
Grew conscious of a God, and the grey seas
Crawled backward, and a long and dismal blare
Blew from some tasselled horn, a sleuth-hound
bayed,
And like a flame a barbèd reed flew whizzing
down the glade.

And where the little flowers of her breast
Just brake into their milky blossoming,
This murderous paramour, this unbidden guest,
Pierced and struck deep in horrid chambering,
And ploughed a bloody furrow with its dart,
And dug a long red road, and cleft with wingèd
death her heart.

Sobbing her life out with a bitter cry
On the boy's body fell the Dryad maid,
Sobbing for incomplete virginity,
And raptures unenjoyed, and pleasures dead,
And all the pain of things unsatisfied,
And the bright drops of crimson youth crept down
her throbbing side.

Ah! pitiful it was to hear her moan,
And very pitiful to see her die
Ere she had yielded up her sweets, or known
The joy of passion, that dread mystery
Which not to know is not to live at all,
And yet to know is to be held in death's most deadly thrall.

But as it hapt the Queen of Cythere,
Who with Adonis all night long had lain
Within some shepherd's hut in Arcady,
On team of silver doves and gilded wain
Was journeying Paphos-ward, high up afar
From mortal ken between the mountains and the morning star,

And when low down she spied the hapless pair,
And heard the Oread's faint despairing cry,
Whose cadence seemed to play upon the air
As though it were a viol, hastily
She bade her pigeons fold each straining plume,
And dropt to earth, and reached the strand, and saw their dolorous doom.

For as a gardener turning back his head
To catch the last notes of the linnet, mows
With careless scythe too near some flower bed,
And cuts the thorny pillar of the rose,
And with the flower's loosened loveliness
Strews the brown mould, or as some shepherd lad in wantonness

Driving his little flock along the mead
Treads down two daffodils which side by side
Have lured the lady-bird with yellow brede
And made the gaudy moth forget its pride,
Treads down their brimming golden chalices
Under light feet which were not made for such
rude ravages,

Or as a schoolboy tired of his book
Flings himself down upon the reedy grass
And plucks two water-lilies from the brook,
And for a time forgets the hour glass,
Then wearies of their sweets, and goes his way,
And lets the hot sun kill them, even so these
lovers lay.

And Venus cried, 'It is dread Artemis
Whose bitter hand hath wrought this cruelty,
Or else that mightier maid whose care it is
To guard her strong and stainless majesty
Upon the hill Athenian,—alas!
That they who loved so well unloved into death's
house should pass.'

So with soft hands she laid the boy and girl
In the great golden waggon tenderly,
Her white throat whiter than a moony pearl
Just threaded with a blue vein's tapestry
Had not yet ceased to throb, and still her breast
Swayed like a wind-stirred lily in ambiguous
unrest.

And then each pigeon spread its milky van,
  The bright car soared into the dawning sky,
And like a cloud the aerial caravan
  Passed over the Ægean silently,
Till the faint air was troubled with the song
From the wan mouths that call on bleeding Thammuz all night long.

But when the doves had reached their wonted goal
  Where the wide stair of orbèd marble dips
Its snows into the sea, her fluttering soul
  Just shook the trembling petals of her lips
And passed into the void, and Venus knew
That one fair maid the less would walk amid her retinue,

And bade her servants carve a cedar chest
  With all the wonder of this history,
Within whose scented womb their limbs should rest
  Where olive-trees make tender the blue sky
On the low hills of Paphos, and the faun
Pipes in the noonday, and the nightingale sings on till dawn.

Nor failed they to obey her hest, and ere
  The morning bee had stung the daffodil
With tiny fretful spear, or from its lair
  The waking stag had leapt across the rill
And roused the ouzel, or the lizard crept
Athwart the sunny rock, beneath the grass their bodies slept.

And when day brake, within that silver shrine
Fed by the flames of cressets tremulous,
Queen Venus knelt and prayed to Proserpine
That she whose beauty made Death amorous
Should beg a guerdon from her pallid Lord,
And let Desire pass across dread Charon's icy ford.

III

IN melancholy moonless Acheron,
Far from the goodly earth and joyous day,
Where no spring ever buds, nor ripening sun
Weighs down the apple trees, nor flowery May
Chequers with chestnut blooms the grassy floor,
Where thrushes never sing, and piping linnets
mate no more,

There by a dim and dark Lethæan well
Young Charmides was lying, wearily
He plucked the blossoms from the asphodel,
And with its little rifled treasury
Strewed the dull waters of the dusky stream,
And watched the white stars founder, and the
land was like a dream,

When as he gazed into the watery glass
And through his brown hair's curly tangles
scanned
His own wan face, a shadow seemed to pass
Across the mirror, and a little hand
Stole into his, and warm lips timidly
Brushed his pale cheeks, and breathed their secret
forth into a sigh.

Then turned he round his weary eyes and saw,
And ever nigher still their faces came,
And nigher ever did their young mouths draw
Until they seemed one perfect rose of flame,
And longing arms around her neck he cast,
And felt her throbbing bosom, and his breath
came hot and fast,

And all his hoarded sweets were hers to kiss,
And all her maidenhood was his to slay,
And limb to limb in long and rapturous bliss
Their passion waxed and waned,—O why essay
To pipe again of love, too venturous reed!
Enough, enough that Erôs laughed upon that
flowerless mead.

Too venturous poesy, O why essay
To pipe again of passion! fold thy wings
O'er daring Icarus and bid thy lay
Sleep hidden in the lyre's silent strings
Till thou hast found the old Castalian rill,
Or from the Lesbian waters plucked drowned
Sappho's golden quill!

Enough, enough that he whose life had been
A fiery pulse of sin, a splendid shame,
Could in the loveless land of Hades glean
One scorching harvest from those fields of flame
Where passion walks with naked unshod feet
And is not wounded,—ah! enough that once their
lips could meet

In that wild throb when all existences
Seemed narrowed to one single ecstasy
Which dies through its own sweetness and the stress
Of too much pleasure, ere Persephone
Had bade them serve her by the ebon throne
Of the pale God who in the fields of Enna loosed her zone.

FLOWERS OF GOLD

IMPRESSIONS

I

LES SILHOUETTES

THE sea is flecked with bars of grey,
The dull dead wind is out of tune,
And like a withered leaf the moon
Is blown across the stormy bay.

Etched clear upon the pallid sand
Lies the black boat: a sailor boy
Clambers aboard in careless joy
With laughing face and gleaming hand.

And overhead the curlews cry,
Where through the dusky upland grass
The young brown-throated reapers pass,
Like silhouettes against the sky.

II

LA FUITE DE LA LUNE

TO outer senses there is peace,
A dreamy peace on either hand,
Deep silence in the shadowy land,
Deep silence where the shadows cease.

Save for a cry that echoes shrill
From some lone bird disconsolate;
A corncrake calling to its mate;
The answer from the misty hill.

And suddenly the moon withdraws
Her sickle from the lightening skies,
And to her sombre cavern flies,
Wrapped in a veil of yellow gauze.

THE GRAVE OF KEATS

RID of the world's injustice, and his pain,
He rests at last beneath God's veil of blue:
Taken from life when life and love were new
The youngest of the martyrs here is lain,
Fair as Sebastian, and as early slain.
No cypress shades his grave, no funeral yew,
But gentle violets weeping with the dew
Weave on his bones an ever-blossoming chain.
O proudest heart that broke for misery!
O sweetest lips since those of Mitylene!
O poet-painter of our English Land!
Thy name was writ in water——it shall stand:
And tears like mine will keep thy memory green,
As Isabella did her Basil-tree.

ROME.

THEOCRITUS

A VILLANELLE

O SINGER of Persephone!
In the dim meadows desolate
Dost thou remember Sicily?

Still through the ivy flits the bee
Where Amaryllis lies in state;
O Singer of Persephone!

Simætha calls on Hecate
And hears the wild dogs at the gate;
Dost thou remember Sicily?

Still by the light and laughing sea
Poor Polypheme bemoans his fate;
O Singer of Persephone!

And still in boyish rivalry
Young Daphnis challenges his mate;
Dost thou remember Sicily?

Slim Lacon keeps a goat for thee,
For thee the jocund shepherds wait;
O Singer of Persephone!
Dost thou remember Sicily?

IN THE GOLD ROOM

A HARMONY

HER ivory hands on the ivory keys
Strayed in a fitful fantasy,
Like the silver gleam when the poplar trees
Rustle their pale leaves listlessly,
Or the drifting foam of a restless sea
When the waves show their teeth in the flying breeze.

Her gold hair fell on the wall of gold
Like the delicate gossamer tangles spun
On the burnished disk of the marigold,
Or the sunflower turning to meet the sun
When the gloom of the dark blue night is done,
And the spear of the lily is aureoled.

And her sweet red lips on these lips of mine
Burned like the ruby fire set
In the swinging lamp of a crimson shrine,
Or the bleeding wounds of the pomegranate,
Or the heart of the lotus drenched and wet
With the spilt-out blood of the rose-red wine.

BALLADE DE MARGUERITE

(NORMANDE)

I AM weary of lying within the chase
When the knights are meeting in market-place.

Nay, go not thou to the red-roofed town
Lest the hoofs of the war-horse tread thee down.

But I would not go where the Squires ride,
I would only walk by my Lady's side.

Alack! and alack! thou art overbold,
A Forester's son may not eat off gold.

Will she love me the less that my Father is seen
Each Martinmas day in a doublet green?

Perchance she is sewing at tapestrie,
Spindle and loom are not meet for thee.

Ah, if she is working the arras bright
I might ravel the threads by the fire-light.

Perchance she is hunting of the deer,
How could you follow o'er hill and mere?

Ah, if she is riding with the court,
I might run beside her and wind the morte.

Perchance she is kneeling in St. Denys,
(On her soul may our Lady have gramercy!)

Ah, if she is praying in lone chapelle,
I might swing the censer and ring the bell.

Come in, my son, for you look sae pale,
The father shall fill thee a stoup of ale.

But who are these knights in bright array?
Is it a pageant the rich folks play?

'Tis the King of England from over sea,
Who has come unto visit our fair countrie.

But why does the curfew toll sae low?
And why do the mourners walk a-row?

O 'tis Hugh of Amiens my sister's son
Who is lying stark, for his day is done.

Nay, nay, for I see white lilies clear,
It is no strong man who lies on the bier.

O 'tis old Dame Jeannette that kept the hall,
I knew she would die at the autumn fall.

Dame Jeannette had not that gold-brown hair,
Old Jeannette was not a maiden fair.

O 'tis none of our kith and none of our kin,
(Her soul may our Lady assoil from sin!)

But I hear the boy's voice chaunting sweet,
'Elle est morte, la Marguerite.'

Come in, my son, and lie on the bed,
And let the dead folk bury their dead.

O mother, you know I loved her true:
O mother, hath one grave room for two?

THE DOLE OF THE KING'S DAUGHTER

(BRETON)

SEVEN stars in the still water,
And seven in the sky;
Seven sins on the King's daughter,
Deep in her soul to lie.

Red roses are at her feet,
(Roses are red in her red-gold hair)
And O where her bosom and girdle meet
Red roses are hidden there.

Fair is the knight who lieth slain
Amid the rush and reed,
See the lean fishes that are fain
Upon dead men to feed.

Sweet is the page that lieth there,
(Cloth of gold is goodly prey,)
See the black ravens in the air,
Black, O black as the night are they.

What do they there so stark and dead?
(There is blood upon her hand)
Why are the lilies flecked with red?
(There is blood on the river sand.)

There are two that ride from the south and east,
  And two from the north and west,
For the black raven a goodly feast,
  For the King's daughter rest.

There is one man who loves her true,
  (Red, O red, is the stain of gore!)
He hath duggen a grave by the darksome yew,
  (One grave will do for four.)

No moon in the still heaven,
  In the black water none,
The sins on her soul are seven.
  The sin upon his is one.

AMOR INTELLECTUALIS

OFT have we trod the vales of Castaly
And heard sweet notes of sylvan music blown
From antique reeds to common folk unknown:
And often launched our bark upon that sea
Which the nine Muses hold in empery,
And ploughed free furrows through the wave and foam,
Nor spread reluctant sail for more safe home
Till we had freighted well our argosy.
Of which despoilèd treasures these remain,
Sordello's passion, and the honeyed line
Of young Endymion, lordly Tamburlaine
Driving his pampered jades, and, more than these,
The seven-fold vision of the Florentine,
And grave-browed Milton's solemn harmonies.

SANTA DECCA

THE Gods are dead: no longer do we bring
To grey-eyed Pallas crowns of olive-leaves!
Demeter's child no more hath tithe of sheaves,
And in the noon the careless shepherds sing,
For Pan is dead, and all the wantoning
By secret glade and devious haunt is o'er:
Young Hylas seeks the water-springs no more;
Great Pan is dead, and Mary's son is King.

And yet—perchance in this sea-trancèd isle,
Chewing the bitter fruit of memory,
Some God lies hidden in the asphodel.
Ah Love! if such there be, then it were well
For us to fly his anger: nay, but see,
The leaves are stirring: let us watch awhile.

CORFU.

A VISION

TWO crownèd Kings, and One that stood alone
With no green weight of laurels round his head,
But with sad eyes as one uncomforted,
And wearied with man's never-ceasing moan
For sins no bleating victim can atone,
And sweet long lips with tears and kisses fed.
Girt was he in a garment black and red,
And at his feet I marked a broken stone
Which sent up lilies, dove-like, to his knees.
Now at their sight, my heart being lit with flame
I cried to Beatricé, 'Who are these?'
And she made answer, knowing well each name,
'Æschylos first, the second Sophokles,
And last (wide stream of tears!) Euripides.'

IMPRESSION DE VOYAGE

THE sea was sapphire coloured, and the sky
Burned like a heated opal through the air;
We hoisted sail; the wind was blowing fair
For the blue lands that to the eastward lie.
From the steep prow I marked with quickening eye
Zakynthos, every olive grove and creek,
Ithaca's cliff, Lycaon's snowy peak,
And all the flower-strewn hills of Arcady.
The flapping of the sail against the mast,
The ripple of the water on the side,
The ripple of girls' laughter at the stern,
The only sounds:—when 'gan the West to burn
And a red sun upon the seas to ride,
I stood upon the soil of Greece at last!

KATAKOLO

THE GRAVE OF SHELLEY

LIKE burnt-out torches by a sick man's bed
Gaunt cypress-trees stand round the sun-bleached stone;
Here doth the little night-owl make her throne,
And the slight lizard show his jewelled head.
And, where the chaliced poppies flame to red,
In the still chamber of yon pyramid
Surely some Old-World Sphinx lurks darkly hid,
Grim warder of this pleasaunce of the dead.

Ah! sweet indeed to rest within the womb
Of Earth, great mother of eternal sleep,
But sweeter far for thee a restless tomb
In the blue cavern of an echoing deep,
Or where the tall ships founder in the gloom
Against the rocks of some wave-shattered steep.

ROME.

BY THE ARNO

THE oleander on the wall
Grows crimson in the dawning light,
Though the grey shadows of the night
Lie yet on Florence like a pall.

The dew is bright upon the hill,
And bright the blossoms overhead,
But ah! the grasshoppers have fled,
The little Attic song is still.

Only the leaves are gently stirred
By the soft breathing of the gale,
And in the almond-scented vale
The lonely nightingale is heard.

The day will make thee silent soon,
O nightingale sing on for love!
While yet upon the shadowy grove
Splinter the arrows of the moon.

Before across the silent lawn
In sea-green vest the morning steals,
And to love's frightened eyes reveals
The long white fingers of the dawn

Fast climbing up the eastern sky
To grasp and slay the shuddering night,
All careless of my heart's delight,
Or if the nightingale should die.

IMPRESSIONS DU THÉÂTRE

FABIEN DEI FRANCHI

To My Friend HENRY IRVING

THE silent room, the heavy creeping shade,
The dead that travel fast, the opening door,
The murdered brother rising through the floor,
The ghost's white fingers on thy shoulders laid,
And then the lonely duel in the glade,
The broken swords, the stifled scream, the gore,
Thy grand revengeful eyes when all is o'er,—
These things are well enough,—but thou wert made
For more august creation! frenzied Lear
Should at thy bidding wander on the heath
With the shrill fool to mock him, Romeo
For thee should lure his love, and desperate fear
Pluck Richard's recreant dagger from its sheath—
Thou trumpet set for Shakespeare's lips to blow!

PHÈDRE

To Sarah Bernhardt

HOW vain and dull this common world must seem
To such a One as thou, who should'st have talked
At Florence with Mirandola, or walked
Through the cool olives of the Academe:
Thou should'st have gathered reeds from a green stream
For Goat-foot Pan's shrill piping, and have played
With the white girls in that Phæacian glade
Where grave Odysseus wakened from his dream.

Ah! surely once some urn of Attic clay
Held thy wan dust, and thou hast come again
Back to this common world so dull and vain,
For thou wert weary of the sunless day,
The heavy fields of scentless asphodel,
The loveless lips with which men kiss in Hell.

WRITTEN AT THE LYCEUM THEATRE

I

PORTIA

To Ellen Terry

I MARVEL not Bassanio was so bold
To peril all he had upon the lead,
Or that proud Aragon bent low his head
Or that Morocco's fiery heart grew cold:
For in that gorgeous dress of beaten gold
Which is more golden than the golden sun
No woman Veronesé looked upon
Was half so fair as thou whom I behold.
Yet fairer when with wisdom as your shield
The sober-suited lawyer's gown you donned,
And would not let the laws of Venice yield
Antonio's heart to that accursèd Jew—
O Portia! take my heart: it is thy due:
I think I will not quarrel with the Bond.

II

QUEEN HENRIETTA MARIA

To Ellen Terry

IN the lone tent, waiting for victory,
She stands with eyes marred by the mists of pain,
Like some wan lily overdrenched with rain:
The clamorous clang of arms, the ensanguined sky,
War's ruin, and the wreck of chivalry
To her proud soul no common fear can bring:
Bravely she tarrieth for her Lord the King,
Her soul a-flame with passionate ecstasy.
O Hair of Gold! O Crimson Lips! O Face
Made for the luring and the love of man!
With thee I do forget the toil and stress,
The loveless road that knows no resting place,
Time's straitened pulse, the soul's dread weariness,
My freedom, and my life republican!

CAMMA

AS one who poring on a Grecian urn
Scans the fair shapes some Attic hand hath made,
God with slim goddess, goodly man with maid,
And for their beauty's sake is loth to turn
And face the obvious day, must I not yearn
For many a secret moon of indolent bliss,
When in the midmost shrine of Artemis
I see thee standing, antique-limbed, and stern?

And yet—methinks I'd rather see thee play
That serpent of old Nile, whose witchery
Made Emperors drunken,—come, great Egypt, shake
Our stage with all thy mimic pageants! Nay,
I am grown sick of unreal passions, make
The world thine Actium, me thine Anthony!

PANTHEA

PANTHEA

NAY, let us walk from fire unto fire,
From passionate pain to deadlier delight—
I am too young to live without desire,
Too young art thou to waste this summer night
Asking those idle questions which of old
Man sought of seer and oracle, and no reply was told.

For, sweet, to feel is better than to know,
And wisdom is a childless heritage,
One pulse of passion—youth's first fiery glow,—
Are worth the hoarded proverbs of the sage:
Vex not thy soul with dead philosophy,
Have we not lips to kiss with, hearts to love and eyes to see!

Dost thou not hear the murmuring nightingale,
Like water bubbling from a silver jar,
So soft she sings the envious moon is pale,
That high in heaven she is hung so far
She cannot hear that love-enraptured tune,—
Mark how she wreathes each horn with mist, yon late and labouring moon.

White lilies, in whose cups the gold bees dream,
  The fallen snow of petals where the breeze
Scatters the chestnut blossom, or the gleam
  Of boyish limbs in water,—are not these
Enough for thee, dost thou desire more?
Alas! the Gods will give nought else from their
    eternal store.

For our high Gods have sick and weary grown
  Of all our endless sins, our vain endeavour
For wasted days of youth to make atone
  By pain or prayer or priest, and never, never,
Hearken they now to either good or ill,
But send their rain upon the just and the unjust
    at will.

They sit at ease, our Gods they sit at ease,
  Strewing with leaves of rose their scented wine,
They sleep, they sleep, beneath the rocking trees
  Where asphodel and yellow lotus twine,
Mourning the old glad days before they knew
What evil things the heart of man could dream,
    and dreaming do.

And far beneath the brazen floor they see
  Like swarming flies the crowd of little men,
The bustle of small lives, then wearily
  Back to their lotus-haunts they turn again
Kissing each others' mouths, and mix more deep
The poppy-seeded draught which brings soft
    purple-lidded sleep.

There all day long the golden-vestured sun,
Their torch-bearer, stands with his torch ablaze,
And, when the gaudy web of noon is spun
By its twelve maidens, through the crimson haze
Fresh from Endymion's arms comes forth the moon,
And the immortal Gods in toils of mortal passions swoon.

There walks Queen Juno through some dewy mead,
Her grand white feet flecked with the saffron dust
Of wind-stirred lilies, while young Ganymede
Leaps in the hot and amber-foaming must,
His curls all tossed, as when the eagle bare
The frightened boy from Ida through the blue Ionian air.

There in the green heart of some garden close
Queen Venus with the shepherd at her side,
Her warm soft body like the briar rose
Which would be white yet blushes at its pride,
Laughs low for love, till jealous Salmacis
Peers through the myrtle-leaves and sighs for pain of lonely bliss.

There never does that dreary north-wind blow
Which leaves our English forests bleak and bare,
Nor ever falls the swift white-feathered snow,
Nor ever doth the red-toothed lightning dare
To wake them in the silver-fretted night
When we lie weeping for some sweet sad sin, some dead delight.

Alas! they know the far Lethæan spring,
The violet-hidden waters well they know,
Where one whose feet with tired wandering
Are faint and broken may take heart and go,
And from those dark depths cool and crystalline
Drink, and draw balm, and sleep for sleepless
souls, and anodyne.

But we oppress our natures. God or Fate
Is our enemy, we starve and feed
On vain repentance—O we are born too late!
What balm for us in bruisèd poppy seed
Who crowd into one finite pulse of time
The joy of infinite love and the fierce pain of
infinite crime.

O we are wearied of this sense of guilt,
Wearied of pleasure's paramour despair,
Wearied of every temple we have built,
Wearied of every right, unanswered prayer,
For man is weak; God sleeps: and heaven is high:
One fiery-coloured moment: one great love; and
lo! we die.

Ah! but no ferry-man with labouring pole
Nears his black shallop to the flowerless strand,
No little coin of bronze can bring the soul
Over Death's river to the sunless land,
Victim and wine and vow are all in vain,
The tomb is sealed; the soldiers watch; the dead
rise not again.

We are resolved into the supreme air,
We are made one with what we touch and see
With our heart's blood each crimson sun is fair,
With our young lives each spring-impassioned tree
Flames into green, the wildest beasts that range
The moor our kinsmen are, all life is one, and all is change.

With beat of systole and of diastole
One grand great life throbs through earth's giant heart,
And mighty waves of single Being roll
From nerveless germ to man, for we are part
Of every rock and bird and beast and hill,
One with the things that prey on us, and one with what we kill.

From lower cells of waking life we pass
To full perfection; thus the world grows old:
We who are godlike now were once a mass
Of quivering purple flecked with bars of gold,
Unsentient or of joy or misery,
And tossed in terrible tangles of some wild and wind-swept sea.

This hot hard flame with which our bodies burn
Will make some meadow blaze with daffodil,
Ay! and those argent breasts of thine will turn
To water-lilies; the brown fields men till
Will be more fruitful for our love to-night,
Nothing is lost in nature, all things live in Death's despite.

The boy's first kiss, the hyacinth's first bell,
The man's last passion, and the last red spear
That from the lily leaps, the asphodel
Which will not let its blossoms blow for fear
Of too much beauty, and the timid shame
Of the young bridegroom at his lover's eyes,—
these with the same

One sacrament are consecrate, the earth
Not we alone hath passions hymeneal,
The yellow buttercups that shake for mirth
At daybreak know a pleasure not less real
Than we do, when in some fresh-blossoming wood,
We draw the spring into our hearts, and feel that
life is good.

So when men bury us beneath the yew
Thy crimson-stainèd mouth a rose will be,
And thy soft eyes lush bluebells dimmed with dew,
And when the white narcissus wantonly
Kisses the wind its playmate some faint joy
Will thrill our dust, and we will be again fond
maid and boy.

And thus without life's conscious torturing pain
In some sweet flower we will feel the sun,
And from the linnet's throat will sing again,
And as two gorgeous-mailèd snakes will run
Over our graves, or as two tigers creep
Through the hot jungle where the yellow-eyed
huge lions sleep

And give them battle! How my heart leaps up
To think of that grand living after death
In beast and bird and flower, when this cup,
Being filled too full of spirit, bursts for breath,
And with the pale leaves of some autumn day
The soul earth's earliest conqueror becomes earth's
last great prey.

O think of it! We shall inform ourselves
Into all sensuous life, the goat-foot Faun,
The Centaur, or the merry bright-eyed Elves
That leave their dancing rings to spite the dawn
Upon the meadows, shall not be more near
Than you and I to nature's mysteries, for we
shall hear

The thrush's heart beat, and the daisies grow,
And the wan snowdrop sighing for the sun
On sunless days in winter, we shall know
By whom the silver gossamer is spun,
Who paints the diapered fritillaries,
On what wide wings from shivering pine to pine
the eagle flies.

Ay! had we never loved at all, who knows
If yonder daffodil had lured the bee
Into its gilded womb, or any rose
Had hung with crimson lamps its little tree!
Methinks no leaf would ever bud in spring,
But for the lovers' lips that kiss, the poets' lips
that sing.

Is the light vanished from our golden sun,
Or is this dædal-fashioned earth less fair,
That we are nature's heritors, and one
With every pulse of life that beats the air?
Rather new suns across the sky shall pass,
New splendour come unto the flower, new glory to the grass.

And we two lovers shall not sit afar,
Critics of nature, but the joyous sea
Shall be our raiment, and the bearded star
Shoot arrows at our pleasure! We shall b
Part of the mighty universal whole,
And through all æons mix and mingle with the Kosmic Soul!

We shall be notes in that great Symphony
Whose cadence circles through the rhythmic spheres,
And all the live World's throbbing heart shall be
One with our heart, the stealthy creeping years
Have lost their terrors now, we shall not die,
The Universe itself shall be our Immortality!

THE FOURTH MOVEMENT

IMPRESSION

LE RÉVEILLON

THE sky is laced with fitful red,
The circling mists and shadows flee,
The dawn is rising from the sea,
Like a white lady from her bed.

And jagged brazen arrows fall
Athwart the feathers of the night,
And a long wave of yellow light
Breaks silently on tower and hall,

And spreading wide across the wold
Wakes into flight some fluttering bird,
And all the chestnut tops are stirred,
And all the branches streaked with gold.

AT VERONA

HOW steep the stairs within Kings' houses are
For exile-wearied feet as mine to tread,
And O how salt and bitter is the bread
Which falls from his Hound's table,—better far
That I had died in the red ways of war,
Or that the gate of Florence bare my head,
Than to live thus, by all things comraded
Which seek the essence of my soul to mar.

'Curse God and die: what better hope than this?
He hath forgotten thee in all the bliss
Of his gold city, and eternal day'—
Nay peace: behind my prison's blinded bars
I do possess what none can take away,
My love, and all the glory of the stars.

APOLOGIA

IS it thy will that I should wax and wane,
Barter my cloth of gold for hodden grey,
And at thy pleasure weave that web of pain
Whose brightest threads are each a wasted day?

Is it thy will—Love that I love so well—
That my Soul's House should be a tortured spot
Wherein, like evil paramours, must dwell
The quenchless flame, the worm that dieth not?

Nay, if it be thy will I shall endure,
And sell ambition at the common mart,
And let dull failure be my vestiture,
And sorrow dig its grave within my heart.

Perchance it may be better so—at least
I have not made my heart a heart of stone,
Nor starved my boyhood of its goodly feast,
Nor walked where Beauty is a thing unknown.

Many a man hath done so; sought to fence
In straitened bonds the soul that should be free,
Trodden the dusty road of common sense,
While all the forest sang of liberty,

Not marking how the spotted hawk in flight
Passed on wide pinion through the lofty air,
To where some steep untrodden mountain height
Caught the last tresses of the Sun God's hair.

Or how the little flower he trod upon,
The daisy, that white-feathered shield of gold,
Followed with wistful eyes the wandering sun
Content if once its leaves were aureoled.

But surely it is something to have been
The best belovèd for a little while,
To have walked hand in hand with Love, and seen
His purple wings flit once across thy smile.

Ay! though the gorgèd asp of passion feed
On my boy's heart, yet have I burst the bars,
Stood face to face with Beauty, known indeed
The Love which moves the Sun and all the stars!

QUIA MULTUM AMAVI

DEAR Heart, I think the young impassioned priest
When first he takes from out the hidden shrine
His God imprisoned in the Eucharist,
And eats the bread, and drinks the dreadful wine,

Feels not such awful wonder as I felt
When first my smitten eyes beat full on thee,
And all night long before thy feet I knelt
Till thou wert wearied of Idolatry.

Ah! hadst thou liked me less and loved me more,
Through all those summer days of joy and rain,
I had not now been sorrow's heritor,
Or stood a lackey in the House of Pain.

Yet, though remorse, youth's white-faced seneschal,
Tread on my heels with all his retinue,
I am most glad I loved thee—think of all
The suns that go to make one speedwell blue!

SILENTIUM AMORIS

AS often-times the too resplendent sun
Hurries the pallid and reluctant moon
Back to her sombre cave, ere she hath won
A single ballad from the nightingale,
So doth thy Beauty make my lips to fail,
And all my sweetest singing out of tune.

And as at dawn across the level mead
On wings impetuous some wind will come,
And with its too harsh kisses break the reed
Which was its only instrument of song,
So my too stormy passions work me wrong,
And for excess of Love my Love is dumb.

But surely unto Thee mine eyes did show
Why I am silent, and my lute unstrung;
Else it were better we should part, and go,
Thou to some lips of sweeter melody,
And I to nurse the barren memory
Of unkissed kisses, and songs never sung.

HER VOICE

THE wild bee reels from bough to bough
With his furry coat and his gauzy wing,
Now in a lily-cup, and now
Setting a jacinth bell a-swing,
In his wandering;
Sit closer love: it was here I trow
I made that vow,

Swore that two lives should be like one
As long as the sea-gull loved the sea,
As long as the sunflower sought the sun,—
It shall be, I said, for eternity
'Twixt you and me!
Dear friend, those times are over and done,
Love's web is spun.

Look upward where the poplar trees
Sway and sway in the summer air,
Here in the valley never a breeze
Scatters the thistledown, but there
Great winds blow fair
From the mighty murmuring mystical seas,
And the wave-lashed leas.

Look upward where the white gull screams,
What does it see that we do not see?
Is that a star? or the lamp that gleams
On some outward voyaging argosy,—
Ah! can it be
We have lived our lives in a land of dreams!
How sad it seems.

Sweet, there is nothing left to say
But this, that love is never lost,
Keen winter stabs the breasts of May
Whose crimson roses burst his frost,
Ships tempest-tossed
Will find a harbour in some bay,
And so we may.

And there is nothing left to do
But to kiss once again, and part,
Nay, there is nothing we should rue,
I have my beauty,—you your Art,
Nay, do not start,
One world was not enough for two
Like me and you.

MY VOICE

WITHIN this restless, hurried, modern world
We took our hearts' full pleasure—You and I,
And now the white sails of our ship are furled,
And spent the lading of our argosy.

Wherefore my cheeks before their time are wan,
For very weeping is my gladness fled,
Sorrow has paled my young mouth's vermilion,
And Ruin draws the curtains of my bed.

But all this crowded life has been to thee
No more than lyre, or lute, or subtle spell
Of viols, or the music of the sea
That sleeps, a mimic echo, in the shell.

TÆDIUM VITÆ

TO stab my youth with desperate knives, to wear
This paltry age's gaudy livery,
To let each base hand filch my treasury,
To mesh my soul within a woman's hair,
And be mere Fortune's lackeyed groom,—I swear
I love it not! these things are less to me
Than the thin foam that frets upon the sea,
Less than the thistledown of summer air
Which hath no seed: better to stand aloof
Far from these slanderous fools who mock my life
Knowing me not, better the lowliest roof
Fit for the meanest hind to sojourn in,
Than to go back to that hoarse cave of strife
Where my white soul first kissed the mouth of sin.

HUMANITAD

HUMANITAD

IT is full winter now: the trees are bare,
Save where the cattle huddle from the cold
Beneath the pine, for it doth never wear
The Autumn's gaudy livery whose gold
Her jealous brother pilfers, but is true
To the green doublet; bitter is the wind, as though
it blew

From Saturn's cave; a few thin wisps of hay
Lie on the sharp black hedges, where the wain
Dragged the sweet pillage of a summer's day
From the low meadows up the narrow lane;
Upon the half-thawed snow the bleating sheep
Press close against the hurdles, and the shivering
house-dogs creep

From the shut stable to the frozen stream
And back again disconsolate, and miss
The bawling shepherds and the noisy team;
And overhead in circling listnessness
The cawing rooks whirl round the frosted stack,
Or crowd the dripping boughs; and in the fen the
ice-pools crack

Where the gaunt bittern stalks among the reeds
And flaps his wings, and stretches back his neck,
And hoots to see the moon; across the meads
Limps the poor frightened hare, a little speck;
And a stray seamew with its fretful cry
Flits like a sudden drift of snow against the dull
grey sky.

Full winter: and the lusty goodman brings
His load of faggots from the chilly byre,
And stamps his feet upon the hearth, and flings
The sappy billets on the waning fire,
And laughs to see the sudden lightening scare
His children at their play; and yet,—the Spring
is in the air,

Already the slim crocus stirs the snow,
And soon yon blanchèd fields will bloom again
With nodding cowslips for some lad to mow,
For with the first warm kisses of the rain
The winter's icy sorrow breaks to tears,
And the brown thrushes mate, and with bright
eyes the rabbit peers

From the dark warren where the fir-cones lie,
And treads one snowdrop under foot, and runs
Over the mossy knoll, and blackbirds fly
Across our path at evening, and the suns
Stay longer with us; ah! how good to see
Grass-girdled Spring in all her joy of laughing
greenery

Dance through the hedges till the early rose,
(That sweet repentance of the thorny briar!)
Burst from its sheathèd emerald and disclose
The little quivering disk of golden fire
Which the bees know so well, for with it come
Pale boy's-love, sops-in-wine, and daffadillies all
in bloom.

Then up and down the field the sower goes,
While close behind the laughing younker scares
With shrilly whoop the black and thievish crows,
And then the chestnut-tree its glory wears,
And on the grass the creamy blossom falls
In odorous excess, and faint half-whispered
madrigals

Steal from the bluebells' nodding carillons
Each breezy morn, and then white jessamine,
That star of its own heaven, snap-dragons
With lolling crimson tongues, and eglantine
In dusty velvets clad usurp the bed
And woodland empery, and when the lingering
rose hath shed

Red leaf by leaf its folded panoply,
And pansies closed their purple-lidded eyes,
Chrysanthemums from gilded argosy
Unload their gaudy scentless merchandise,
And violets getting overbold withdraw
From their shy nooks, and scarlet berries dot the
leafless haw.

O happy field! and O thrice happy tree!
Soon will your queen in daisy-flowered smock
And crown of flower-de-luce trip down the lea,
Soon will the lazy shepherds drive their flock
Back to the pasture by the pool, and soon
Through the green leaves will float the hum of murmuring bees at noon.

Soon will the glade be bright with bellamour,
The flower which wantons love, and those sweet nuns
Vale-lilies in their snowy vestiture
Will tell their beaded pearls, and carnations
With mitred dusky leaves will scent the wind,
And straggling traveller's-joy each hedge with yellow stars will bind.

Dear Bride of Nature and most bounteous Spring!
That canst give increase to the sweet-breath'd kine,
And to the kid its little horns, and bring
The soft and silky blossoms to the vine,
Where is that old nepenthe which of yore
Man got from poppy root and glossy-berried mandragore!

There was a time when any common bird
Could make me sing in unison, a time
When all the strings of boyish life were stirred
To quick response or more melodious rhyme
By every forest idyll;—do I change?
Or rather doth some evil thing through thy fair pleasaunce range?

Nay, nay, thou art the same: 'tis I who seek
To vex with sighs thy simple solitude,
And because fruitless tears bedew my cheek
Would have thee weep with me in brotherhood;
Fool! shall each wronged and restless spirit dare
To taint such wine with the salt poison of his own despair!

Thou art the same: 'tis I whose wretched soul
Takes discontent to be its paramour,
And gives its kingdom to the rude control
Of what should be its servitor,—for sure
Wisdom is somewhere, though the stormy sea
Contain it not, and the huge deep answer ''Tis not in me.'

To burn with one clear flame, to stand erect
In natural honour, not to bend the knee
In profitless prostrations whose effect
Is by itself condemned, what alchemy
Can teach me this? what herb Medea brewed
Will bring the unexultant peace of essence not subdued?

The minor chord which ends the harmony,
And for its answering brother waits in vain
Sobbing for incompleted melody,
Dies a Swan's death; but I the heir of pain,
A silent Memnon with blank lid-less eyes,
Wait for the light and music of those suns which never rise.

The quenched-out torch, the lonely cypress-gloom,
The little dust stored in the narrow urn,
The gentle XAIPE of the Attic tomb,—
Were not these better far than to return
To my old fitful restless malady,
Or spend my days within the voiceless cave of misery?

Nay! for perchance that poppy-crownèd God
Is like the watcher by a sick man's bed
Who talks of sleep but gives it not; his rod
Hath lost its virtue, and, when all is said,
Death is too rude, too obvious a key
To solve one single secret in a life's philosophy.

And Love! that noble madness, whose august
And inextinguishable might can slay
The soul with honeyed drugs,—alas! I must
From such sweet ruin play the runaway,
Although too constant memory never can
Forget the archèd splendour of those brows Olympian

Which for a little season made my youth
So soft a swoon of exquisite indolence
That all the chiding of more prudent Truth
Seemed the thin voice of jealousy,—O Hence
Thou huntress deadlier than Artemis!
Go seek some other quarry! for of thy too perilous bliss

My lips have drunk enough,—no more, no more,—
Though Love himself should turn his gilded prow
Back to the troubled waters of this shore
Where I am wrecked and stranded, even now
The chariot wheels of passion sweep too near,
Hence! Hence! I pass unto a life more barren,
more austere.

More barren—ay, those arms will never lean
Down through the trellised vines and draw my
soul
In sweet reluctance through the tangled green;
Some other head must wear that aureole,
For I am Hers who loves not any man
Whose white and stainless bosom bears the sign
Gorgonian.

Let Venus go and chuck her dainty page,
And kiss his mouth, and toss his curly hair,
With net and spear and hunting equipage
Let young Adonis to his tryst repair,
But me her fond and subtle-fashioned spell
Delights no more, though I could win her dearest
citadel.

Ay, though I were that laughing shepherd boy
Who from Mount Ida saw the little cloud
Pass over Tenedos and lofty Troy
And knew the coming of the Queen, and bowed
In wonder at her feet, not for the sake
Of a new Helen would I bid her hand the apple take.

Then rise supreme Athena argent-limbed!
And, if my lips be music-less, inspire
At least my life: was not thy glory hymned
By One who gave to thee his sword and lyre
Like Æschylos at well-fought Marathon,
And died to show that Milton's England still could bear a son!

And yet I cannot tread the Portico
And live without desire, fear and pain,
Or nurture that wise calm which long ago
The grave Athenian master taught to men,
Self-poised, self-centred, and self-comforted,
To watch the world's vain phantasies go by with un-bowed head.

Alas! that serene brow, those eloquent lips,
Those eyes that mirrored all eternity,
Rest in their own Colonos, an eclipse
Hath come on Wisdom, and Mnemosyne
Is childless; in the night which she had made
For lofty secure flight Athena's owl itself hath strayed.

Nor much with Science do I care to climb,
Although by strange and subtle witchery
She draw the moon from heaven: the Muse of Time
Unrolls her gorgeous-coloured tapestry
To no less eager eyes; often indeed
In the great epic of Polymnia's scroll I love to read

How Asia sent her myriad hosts to war
Against a little town, and panoplied
In gilded mail with jewelled scimitar,
White-shielded, purple-crested, rode the Mede
Between the waving poplars and the sea
Which men call Artemisium, till he saw Thermopylæ

Its steep ravine spanned by a narrow wall,
And on the nearer side a little brood
Of careless lions holding festival!
And stood amazèd at such hardihood,
And pitched his tent upon the reedy shore,
And stayed two days to wonder, and then crept at midnight o'er

Some unfrequented height, and coming down
The autumn forests treacherously slew
What Sparta held most dear and was the crown
Of far Eurotas, and passed on, nor knew
How God had staked an evil net for him
In the small bay at Salamis,—and yet, the page grows dim,

Its cadenced Greek delights me not, I feel
With such a goodly time too out of tune
To love it much: for like the Dial's wheel
That from its blinded darkness strikes the noon
Yet never sees the sun, so do my eyes
Restlessly follow that which from my cheated vision flies.

O for one grand unselfish simple life
To teach us what is Wisdom! speak ye hills
Of lone Helvellyn, for this note of strife
Shunned your untroubled crags and crystal rills,
Where is that Spirit which living blamelessly
Yet dared to kiss the smitten mouth of his own century!

Speak ye Rydalian laurels! where is He
Whose gentle head ye sheltered, that pure soul
Whose gracious days of uncrowned majesty
Through lowliest conduct touched the lofty goal
Where Love and Duty mingle! Him at least
The most high Laws were glad of, He had sat at Wisdom's feast,

But we are Learning's changelings, know by rote
The clarion watchword of each Grecian school
And follow none, the flawless sword which smote
The pagan Hydra is an effete tool
Which we ourselves have blunted, what man now
Shall scale the august ancient heights and to old Reverence bow?

One such indeed I saw, but, Ichabod!
Gone is that last dear son of Italy,
Who being man died for the sake of God,
And whose un-risen bones sleep peacefully,
O guard him, guard him well, my Giotto's tower,
Thou marble lily of the lily town! let not the lour

Of the rude tempest vex his slumber, or
The Arno with its tawny troubled gold
O'er-leap its marge, no mightier conqueror
Clomb the high Capitol in the days of old
When Rome was indeed Rome, for Liberty
Walked like a Bride beside him, at which sight pale Mystery

Fled shrieking to her farthest sombrest cell
With an old man who grabbled rusty keys,
Fled shuddering, for that immemorial knell
With which oblivion buries dynasties
Swept like a wounded eagle on the blast,
As to the holy heart of Rome the great triumvir passed.

He knew the holiest heart and heights of Rome,
He drave the base wolf from the lion's lair,
And now lies dead by that empyreal dome
Which overtops Valdarno hung in air
By Brunelleschi—O Melpomene
Breathe through thy melancholy pipe thy sweetest threnody!

Breathe through the tragic stops such melodies
That Joy's self may grow jealous, and the Nine
Forget awhile their discreet emperies,
Mourning for him who on Rome's lordliest shrine
Lit for men's lives the light of Marathon,
And bare to sun-forgotten fields the fire of the sun!

O guard him, guard him well, my Giotto's tower,
  Let some young Florentine each eventide
Bring coronals of that enchanted flower
  Which the dim woods of Vallombrosa hide,
And deck the marble tomb wherein he lies
Whose soul is as some mighty orb unseen of mortal
    eyes.

Some mighty orb whose cycled wanderings,
  Being tempest-driven to the farthest rim
Where Chaos meets Creation and the wings
  Of the eternal chanting Cherubim
Are pavilioned on Nothing, passed away
Into a moonless void,—and yet, though he is dust
    and clay,

He is not dead, the immemorial Fates
  Forbid it, and the closing shears refrain,
Lift up your heads, ye everlasting gates!
  Ye argent clarions, sound a loftier strain!
For the vile thing he hated lurks within
Its sombre house, alone with God and memories
    of sin.

Still what avails it that she sought her cave
  That murderous mother of red harlotries?
At Munich on the marble architrave
  The Grecian boys die smiling, but the seas
Which wash Ægina fret in loneliness
Not mirroring their beauty, so our lives grow
    colourless

For lack of our ideals, if one star
Flame torch-like in the heavens the unjust
Swift daylight kills it, and no trump of war
Can wake to passionate voice the silent dust
Which was Mazzini once! rich Niobe
For all her stony sorrows hath her sons, but Italy!

What Easter Day shall make her children rise,
Who were not Gods yet suffered? what sure feet
Shall find their grave-clothes folded? what clear eyes
Shall see them bodily? O it were meet
To roll the stone from off the sepulchre
And kiss the bleeding roses of their wounds, in love of Her

Our Italy! our mother visible!
Most blessed among nations and most sad,
For whose dear sake the young Calabrian fell
That day at Aspromonte and was glad
That in an age when God was bought and sold
One man could die for Liberty! but we, burnt out and cold,

See Honour smitten on the cheek and gyves
Bind the sweet feet of Mercy: Poverty
Creeps through our sunless lanes and with sharp knives
Cuts the warm throats of children stealthily,
And no word said:—O we are wretched men
Unworthy of our great inheritance! where is the pen

Of austere Milton? where the mighty sword
  Which slew its master righteously? the years
Have lost their ancient leader, and no word
  Breaks from the voiceless tripod on our ears:
While as a ruined mother in some spasm
Bears a base child and loathes it, so our best
    enthusiasm

Genders unlawful children, Anarchy
  Freedom's own Judas, the vile prodigal
Licence who steals the gold of Liberty
  And yet has nothing, Ignorance the real
One Fratricide since Cain, Envy the asp
That stings itself to anguish, Avarice whose palsied
    grasp

Is in its extent stiffened, moneyed Greed
  For whose dull appetite men waste away
Amid the whirr of wheels and are the seed
  Of things which slay their sower, these each day
Sees rife in England, and the gentle feet
Of Beauty tread no more the stones of each
    unlovely street.

What even Cromwell spared is desecrated
  By weed and worm, left to the stormy play
Of wind and beating snow, or renovated
  By more destructful hands: Time's worst decay
Will wreathe its ruins with some loveliness,
But these new Vandals can but make a rain-proof
    barrenness.

Where is that Art which bade the Angels sing
Through Lincoln's lofty choir, till the air
Seems from such marble harmonies to ring
With sweeter song than common lips can dare
To draw from actual reed? ah! where is now
The cunning hand which made the flowering hawthorn branches bow

For Southwell's arch, and carved the House of One
Who loved the lilies of the field with all
Our dearest English flowers? the same sun
Rises for us: the seasons natural
Weave the same tapestry of green and grey:
The unchanged hills are with us: but that Spirit hath passed away.

And yet perchance it may be better so,
For Tyranny is an incestuous Queen,
Murder her brother is her bedfellow,
And the Plague chambers with her: in obscene
And bloody paths her treacherous feet are set;
Better the empty desert and a soul inviolate!

For gentle brotherhood, the harmony
Of living in the healthful air, the swift
Clean beauty of strong limbs when men are free
And women chaste, these are the things which lift
Our souls up more than even Agnolo's
Gaunt blinded Sibyl poring o'er the scroll of human woes,

Or Titian's little maiden on the stair
  White as her own sweet lily and as tall,
Or Mona Lisa smiling through her hair,—
  Ah! somehow life is bigger after all
Than any painted Angel, could we see
The God that is within us! The old Greek
    serenity

Which curbs the passion of that level line
  Of marble youths, who with untroubled eyes
And chastened limbs ride round Athena's shrine
  And mirror her divine economies,
And balanced symmetry of what in man
Would else wage ceaseless warfare,—this at least
    within the span

Between our mother's kisses and the grave
  Might so inform our lives, that we could win
Such mighty empires that from her cave
  Temptation would grow hoarse, and pallid Sin
Would walk ashamed of his adulteries,
And Passion creep from out the House of Lust
    with startled eyes.

To make the Body and the Spirit one
  With all right things, till no thing live in vain
From morn to noon, but in sweet unison
  With every pulse of flesh and throb of brain
The Soul in flawless essence high enthroned,
Against all outer vain attack invincibly bastioned,

Mark with serene impartiality
The strife of things, and yet be comforted,
Knowing that by the chain causality
All separate existences are wed
Into one supreme whole, whose utterance
Is joy, or holier praise! ah! surely this were governance

Of Life in most august omnipresence,
Through which the rational intellect would find
In passion its expression, and mere sense,
Ignoble else, lend fire to the mind,
And being joined with it in harmony
More mystical than that which binds the stars planetary,

Strike from their several tones one octave chord
Whose cadence being measureless would fly
Through all the circling spheres, then to its Lord
Return refreshed with its new empery
And more exultant power,—this indeed
Could we but reach it were to find the last, the perfect creed.

Ah! it was easy when the world was young
To keep one's life free and inviolate,
From our sad lips another song is rung,
By our own hands our heads are desecrate,
Wanderers in drear exile, and dispossessed
Of what should be our own, we can but feed on wild unrest.

Somehow the grace, the bloom of things has flown,
And of all men we are most wretched who
Must live each other's lives and not our own
For very pity's sake and then undo
All that we lived for—it was otherwise
When soul and body seemed to blend in mystic symphonies.

But we have left those gentle haunts to pass
With weary feet to the new Calvary,
Where we behold, as one who in a glass
Sees his own face, self-slain Humanity,
And in the dumb reproach of that sad gaze
Learn what an awful phantom the red hand of man can raise.

O smitten mouth! O forehead crowned with thorn!
O chalice of all common miseries!
Thou for our sakes that loved thee not hast borne
An agony of endless centuries,
And we were vain and ignorant nor knew
That when we stabbed thy heart it was our own real hearts we slew.

Being ourselves the sowers and the seeds,
The night that covers and the lights that fade,
The spear that pierces and the side that bleeds,
The lips betraying and the life betrayed;
The deep hath calm: the moon hath rest: but we
Lords of the natural world are yet our own dread enemy.

Is this the end of all that primal force
Which, in its changes being still the same,
From eyeless Chaos cleft its upward course,
Through ravenous seas and whirling rocks and flame,
Till the suns met in heaven and began
Their cycles, and the morning stars sang, and the Word was Man!

Nay, nay, we are but crucified, and though
The bloody sweat falls from our brows like rain,
Loosen the nails—we shall come down I know,
Staunch the red wounds—we shall be whole again,
No need have we of hyssop-laden rod,
That which is purely human, that is Godlike, that is God.

FLOWER OF LOVE

ΓΛΥΚΥΠΙΚΡΟΣ ΕΡΩΣ

SWEET, I blame you not, for mine the fault was, had I not been made of common clay
I had climbed the higher heights unclimbed yet, seen the fuller air, the larger day.

From the wildness of my wasted passion I had struck a better, clearer song,
Lit some lighter light of freer freedom, battled with some Hydra-headed wrong.

Had my lips been smitten into music by the kisses that made them bleed,
You had walked with Bice and the angels on that verdant and enamelled mead.

I had trod the road which Dante treading saw the suns of seven circles shine,
Ay! perchance had seen the heavens opening, as they opened to the Florentine.

And the mighty nations would have crowned me, who am crownless now and without name,
And some orient dawn had found me kneeling on the threshold of the House of Fame.

I had sat within that marble circle where the
oldest bard is as the young,
And the pipe is ever dropping honey, and the
lyre's strings are ever strung.

Keats had lifted up his hymeneal curls from out
the poppy-seeded wine,
With ambrosial mouth had kissed my forehead,
clasped the hand of noble love in mine.

And at springtide, when the apple-blossoms brush
the burnished bosom of the dove,
Two young lovers lying in an orchard would have
read the story of our love.

Would have read the legend of my passion, known
the bitter secret of my heart,
Kissed as we have kissed, but never parted as we
two are fated now to part.

For the crimson flower of our life is eaten by the
cankerworm of truth,
And no hand can gather up the fallen withered
petals of the rose of youth.

Yet I am not sorry that I loved you—ah! what
else had I a boy to do,—
For the hungry teeth of time devour, and the
silent-footed years pursue.

Rudderless, we drift athwart a tempest, and when
once the storm of youth is past,
Without lyre, without lute or chorus, Death the
silent pilot comes at last.

And within the grave there is no pleasure, for the
blindworm battens on the root,
And Desire shudders into ashes, and the tree of
Passion bears no fruit.

Ah! what else had I to do but love you, God's
own mother was less dear to me,
And less dear the Cytheræan rising like an argent
lily from the sea.

I have made my choice, have lived my poems,
and, though youth is gone in wasted days,
I have found the lover's crown of myrtle better
than the poet's crown of bays.

UNCOLLECTED POEMS

FROM SPRING DAYS TO WINTER

(FOR MUSIC)

IN the glad spring time when leaves were green,
O merrily the throstle sings!
I sought, amid the tangled sheen,
Love whom mine eyes had never seen,
O the glad dove has golden wings!

Between the blossoms red and white,
O merrily the throstle sings!
My love first came into my sight,
O perfect vision of delight,
O the glad dove has golden wings!

The yellow apples glowed like fire,
O merrily the throstle sings!
O Love too great for lip or lyre,
Blown rose of love and of desire,
O the glad dove has golden wings!

But now with snow the tree is grey,
Ah, sadly now the throstle sings!
My love is dead: ah! well-a-day,
See at her silent feet I lay
A dove with broken wings!
Ah, Love! ah, Love! that thou wert slain—
Fond Dove, fond Dove return again!

Αἴλινον, αἴλινον εἰπέ, τὸ δ' εὖ νικάτω.

O WELL for him who lives at ease
With garnered gold in wide domain,
Nor heeds the splashing of the rain,
The crashing down of forest trees.

O well for him who ne'er hath known
The travail of the hungry years,
A father grey with grief and tears,
A mother weeping all alone.

But well for him whose foot hath trod
The weary road of toil and strife,
Yet from the sorrows of his life
Builds ladders to be nearer God.

THE TRUE KNOWLEDGE

. . . ἀναγκαίως δ' ἔχει
βίον θερίζειν ὥστε κάρπιμον στάχυν,
καὶ τὸν μὲν εἶναι τὸν δὲ μή.

THOU knowest all, I seek in vain
What lands to till or sow with seed—
The land is black with briar and weed,
Nor cares for falling tears or rain.

Thou knowest all, I sit and wait
With blinded eyes and hands that fall,
Till the last lifting of the veil
And the first opening of the gate.

Thou knowest all, I cannot see
I trust I shall not live in vain,
I know that we shall meet again
In some divine eternity.

LOTUS LEAVES

νεμεσσῶμαί γε μὲν οὐδέν
κλαίειν ὅς κε θάνῃσι βροτῶν καὶ πότμον ἐπίσπῃ,
τοῦτό νυ καὶ γέρας οἷον ὀϊζυροῖσι βροτοῖσι
κείρασθαί τε κόμην βαλέειν τ' ἀπὸ δάκρυ παρειῶν.

THERE is no peace beneath the noon.
Ah! in those meadows is there peace
Where, girdled with a silver fleece,
As a bright shepherd, strays the moon?

Queen of the gardens of the sky,
Where stars like lilies, white and fair,
Shine through the mists of frosty air,
Oh, tarry, for the dawn is nigh!

O, tarry, for the envious day
Stretches long hands to catch thy feet.
Alas! but thou art over-fleet,
Alas! I know thou wilt not stay.

. . . . .

Up sprang the sun to run his race,
The breeze blew fair on meadow and lea;
But in the west I seemed to see
The likeness of a human face.

A linnet on the hawthorn spray
  Sang of the glories of the spring,
  And made the flow'ring copses ring
With gladness for the new-born day.

A lark from out the grass I trod
  Flew wildly, and was lost to view
  In the great seamless veil of blue
That hangs before the face of God.

The willow whispered overhead
  That death is but a newer life,
  And that with idle words of strife
We bring dishonour on the dead.

I took a branch from off the tree,
  And hawthorn-blossoms drenched with dew,
  I bound them with a sprig of yew,
And made a garland fair to see.

I laid the flowers where He lies,
  (Warm leaves and flowers on the stone);
  What joy I had to sit alone
Till evening broke on tired eyes:

Till all the shifting clouds had spun
  A robe of gold for God to wear,
  And into seas of purple air
Sank the bright galley of the sun.

. . . . . .

Shall I be gladdened for the day,
  And let my inner heart be stirred
  By murmuring tree or song of bird,
And sorrow at the wild wind's play?

Not so: such idle dreams belong
  To souls of lesser depth than mine;
  I feel that I am half divine;
I know that I am great and strong.

I know that every forest tree
  By labour rises from the root;
  I know that none shall gather fruit
By sailing on the barren sea.

WASTED DAYS

(FROM A PICTURE PAINTED BY MISS V. T.)

A FAIR slim boy not made for this world's pain,
With hair of gold thick clustering round his ears,
And longing eyes half veiled by foolish tears
Like bluest water seen through mists of rain;
Pale cheeks whereon no kiss hath left its stain,
Red under-lip drawn in for fear of Love,
And white throat whiter than the breast of dove—
Alas! alas! if all should be in vain.

Corn-fields behind, and reapers all a-row
In weariest labour toiling wearily,
To no sweet sound of laughter or of lute.

And careless of the crimson sunset glow,
The boy still dreams; nor knows that night is nigh,
And in the night-time no man gathers fruit.

IMPRESSIONS

I

LE JARDIN

THE lily's withered chalice falls
Around its rod of dusty gold,
And from the beech-trees on the wold
The last wood-pigeon coos and calls.

The gaudy leonine sunflower
Hangs black and barren on its stalk,
And down the windy garden walk
The dead leaves scatter,—hour by hour.

Pale privet-petals white as milk
Are blown into a snowy mass:
The roses lie upon the grass
Like little shreds of crimson silk.

II

LA MER

A WHITE mist drifts across the shrouds,
A wild moon in this wintry sky
Gleams like an angry lion's eye
Out of a mane of tawny clouds.

The muffled steersman at the wheel
Is but a shadow in the gloom;—
And in the throbbing engine room
Leap the long rods of polished steel.

The shattered storm has left its trace
Upon this huge and heaving dome,
For the thin threads of yellow foam
Float on the waves like ravelled lace.

UNDER THE BALCONY

O BEAUTIFUL star with the crimson mouth!
O moon with the brows of gold!
Rise up, rise up, from the odorous south!
And light for my love her way,
Lest her little feet should stray
On the windy hill and the wold!
O beautiful star with the crimson mouth!
O moon with the brows of gold!

O ship that shakes on the desolate sea!
O ship with the wet, white sail!
Put in, put in, to the port to me!
For my love and I would go
To the land where the daffodils blow
In the heart of a violet dale!
O ship that shakes on the desolate sea!
O ship with the wet, white sail!

O rapturous bird with the low, sweet note!
O bird that sings on the spray!
Sing on, sing on, from your soft brown throat!
And my love in her little bed
Will listen, and lift her head
From the pillow, and come my way!
O rapturous bird with the low, sweet note!
O bird that sits on the spray!

O blossom that hangs in the tremulous air!
O blossom with lips of snow!
Come down, come down, for my love to wear!
You will die on her head in a crown,
You will die in a fold of her gown,
To her little light heart you will go!
O blossom that hangs in the tremulous air!
O blossom with lips of snow!

THE HARLOT'S HOUSE

WE caught the tread of dancing feet,
We loitered down the moonlit street,
And stopped beneath the harlot's house.

Inside, above the din and fray,
We heard the loud musicians play
The 'Treues Liebes Herz' of Strauss.

Like strange mechanical grotesques,
Making fantastic arabesques,
The shadows raced across the blind.

We watched the ghostly dancers spin
To sound of horn and violin,
Like black leaves wheeling in the wind.

Like wire-pulled automatons,
Slim silhouetted skeletons
Went sidling through the slow quadrille.

They took each other by the hand,
And danced a stately saraband;
Their laughter echoed thin and shrill.

Sometimes a clockwork puppet pressed
A phantom lover to her breast,
Sometimes they seemed to try to sing.

Sometimes a horrible marionette
Came out, and smoked its cigarette
Upon the steps like a live thing.

Then, turning to my love, I said,
'The dead are dancing with the dead,
The dust is whirling with the dust.'

But she—she heard the violin,
And left my side, and entered in:
Love passed into the house of lust.

Then suddenly the tune went false,
The dancers wearied of the waltz,
The shadows ceased to wheel and whirl.

And down the long and silent street,
The dawn, with silver-sandalled feet,
Crept like a frightened girl.

LE JARDIN DES TUILERIES

THIS winter air is keen and cold,
And keen and cold this winter sun,
But round my chair the children run
Like little things of dancing gold.

Sometimes about the painted kiosk
The mimic soldiers strut and stride,
Sometimes the blue-eyed brigands hide
In the bleak tangles of the bosk.

And sometimes, while the old nurse cons
Her book, they steal across the square,
And launch their paper navies where
Huge Triton writhes in greenish bronze.

And now in mimic flight they flee,
And now they rush, a boisterous band—
And, tiny hand on tiny hand,
Climb up the black and leafless tree.

Ah! cruel tree! if I were you,
And children climbed me, for their sake
Though it be winter I would break
Into spring blossoms white and blue!

ON THE SALE BY AUCTION OF KEATS' LOVE LETTERS

THESE are the letters which Endymion wrote
To one he loved in secret, and apart.
And now the brawlers of the auction mart
Bargain and bid for each poor blotted note,
Ay! for each separate pulse of passion quote
The merchant's price. I think they love not art
Who break the crystal of a poet's heart
That small and sickly eyes may glare and gloat.

Is it not said that many years ago,
In a far Eastern town, some soldiers ran
With torches through the midnight, and began
To wrangle for mean raiment, and to throw
Dice for the garments of a wretched man,
Not knowing the God's wonder, or His woe?

THE NEW REMORSE

THE sin was mine; I did not understand.
So now is music prisoned in her cave,
Save where some ebbing desultory wave
Frets with its restless whirls this meagre strand.
And in the withered hollow of this land
Hath Summer dug herself so deep a grave,
That hardly can the leaden willow crave
One silver blossom from keen Winter's hand.
But who is this who cometh by the shore?
(Nay, love, look up and wonder!) Who is this
Who cometh in dyed garments from the South?
It is thy new-found Lord, and he shall kiss
The yet unravished roses of thy mouth,
And I shall weep and worship, as before.

FANTAISIES DÉCORATIVES

I

LE PANNEAU

UNDER the rose-tree's dancing shade
There stands a little ivory girl,
Pulling the leaves of pink and pearl
With pale green nails of polished jade.

The red leaves fall upon the mould,
The white leaves flutter, one by one,
Down to a blue bowl where the sun,
Like a great dragon, writhes in gold.

The white leaves float upon the air,
The red leaves flutter idly down,
Some fall upon her yellow gown,
And some upon her raven hair.

She takes an amber lute and sings,
And as she sings a silver crane
Begins his scarlet neck to strain,
And flap his burnished metal wings.

She takes a lute of amber bright,
  And from the thicket where he lies
  Her lover, with his almond eyes,
Watches her movements in delight.

And now she gives a cry of fear,
  And tiny tears begin to start:
  A thorn has wounded with its dart
The pink-veined sea-shell of her ear.

And now she laughs a merry note:
  There has fallen a petal of the rose
  Just where the yellow satin shows
The blue-veined flower of her throat.

With pale green nails of polished jade,
  Pulling the leaves of pink and pearl,
  There stands a little ivory girl
Under the rose-tree's dancing shade.

II

LES BALLONS

AGAINST these turbid turquoise skies
The light and luminous balloons
Dip and drift like satin moons,
Drift like silken butterflies;

Reel with every windy gust,
Rise and reel like dancing girls,
Float like strange transparent pearls,
Fall and float like silver dust.

Now to the low leaves they cling,
Each with coy fantastic pose,
Each a petal of a rose
Straining at a gossamer string.

Then to the tall trees they climb,
Like thin globes of amethyst,
Wandering opals keeping tryst
With the rubies of the lime.

CANZONET

I HAVE no store
Of gryphon-guarded gold;
Now, as before,
Bare is the shepherd's fold.
Rubies, nor pearls,
Have I to gem thy throat;
Yet woodland girls
Have loved the shepherd's note.

Then, pluck a reed
And bid me sing to thee,
For I would feed
Thine ears with melody,
Who art more fair
Than fairest fleur-de-lys,
More sweet and rare
Than sweetest ambergris.

What dost thou fear?
Young Hyacinth is slain,
Pan is not here,
And will not come again.

No hornèd Faun
Treads down the yellow leas,
No God at dawn
Steals through the olive trees.

Hylas is dead,
Nor will he e'er divine
Those little red
Rose-petalled lips of thine.
On the high hill
No ivory dryads play,
Silver and still
Sinks the sad autumn day.

SYMPHONY IN YELLOW

An omnibus across the bridge
Crawls like a yellow butterfly,
And, here and there, a passer-by
Shows like a little restless midge.

Big barges full of yellow hay
Are moved against the shadowy wharf,
And, like a yellow silken scarf,
The thick fog hangs along the quay.

The yellow leaves begin to fade
And flutter from the Temple elms,
And at my feet the pale green Thames
Lies like a rod of rippled jade.

IN THE FOREST

OUT of the mid-wood's twilight
Into the meadow's dawn,
Ivory limbed and brown-eyed,
Flashes my Faun!

He skips through the copses singing,
And his shadow dances along,
And I know not which I should follow,
Shadow or song!

O Hunter, snare me his shadow!
O Nightingale, catch me his strain!
Else moonstruck with music and madness
I track him in vain!

TO MY WIFE

WITH A COPY OF MY POEMS

I CAN write no stately proem
As a prelude to my lay;
From a poet to a poem
I would dare to say.

For if of these fallen petals
One to you seem fair,
Love will waft it till it settles
On your hair.

And when wind and winter harden
All the loveless land,
It will whisper of the garden,
You will understand.

WITH A COPY OF "A HOUSE OF POMEGRANATES"

GO, little book,
To him who, on a lute with horns of pearl,
Sang of the white feet of the Golden Girl:
And bid him look
Into thy pages: it may hap that he
May find that golden maidens dance through thee.

TO L. L.

COULD we dig up this long-buried treasure,
Were it worth the pleasure,
We never could learn love's song,
We are parted too long.

Could the passionate past that is fled
Call back its dead,
Could we live it all over again,
Were it worth the pain!

I remember we used to meet
By an ivied seat,
And you warbled each pretty word
With the air of a bird;

And your voice had a quaver in it,
Just like a linnet,
And shook, as the blackbird's throat
With its last big note;

And your eyes, they were green and grey
Like an April day,
But lit into amethyst
When I stooped and kissed;

And your mouth, it would never smile
For a long, long while,
Then it rippled all over with laughter
Five minutes after.

You were always afraid of a shower,
Just like a flower:
I remember you started and ran
When the rain began.

I remember I never could catch you,
For no one could match you,
You had wonderful, luminous, fleet,
Little wings to your feet.

I remember your hair—did I tie it?
For it always ran riot—
Like a tangled sunbeam of gold:
These things are old.

I remember so well the room,
And the lilac bloom
That beat at the dripping pane
In the warm June rain;

And the colour of your gown,
It was amber-brown,
And two yellow satin bows
From your shoulders rose.

And the handkerchief of French lace
  Which you held to your face—
Had a small tear left a stain?
  Or was it the rain?

On your hand as it waved adieu
  There were veins of blue;
In your voice as it said good-bye
  Was a petulant cry,

'You have only wasted your life.'
  (Ah, that was the knife!)
When I rushed through the garden gate
  It was all too late.

Could we live it over again,
  Were it worth the pain,
Could the passionate past that is fled
  Call back its dead!

Well, if my heart must break,
  Dear love, for your sake,
It will break in music, I know,
  Poets' hearts break so.

But strange that I was not told
  That the brain can hold
In a tiny ivory cell
  God's heaven and hell.

TRANSLATIONS

CHORUS OF CLOUD MAIDENS

('Αριστοφάνους Νεφέλαι, 275-290, 298-313.)

ΣΤΡΟΦΗ

CLOUD MAIDENS that float on for ever,
Dew-sprinkled, fleet bodies, and fair,
Let us rise from our Sire's loud river,
Great Ocean, and soar through the air
To the peaks of the pine-covered mountains where
the pines hang as tresses of hair.
Let us seek the watch-towers undaunted,
Where the well-watered corn-fields abound,
And through murmurs of rivers nymph-
haunted
The songs of the sea-waves resound;
And the sun in the sky never wearies of spreading
his radiance around.
Let us cast off the haze
Of the mists from our band,
Till with far-seeing gaze
We may look on the land.

. . . . . .

ΑΝΤΙΣΤΡΟΦΗ

Cloud maidens that bring the rain-shower,
To the Pallas-loved land let us wing,
To the land of stout heroes and Power,
Where Kekrops was hero and king,
Where honour and silence is given
To the mysteries that none may declare,
Where are gifts to the high gods in heaven
When the house of the gods is laid bare,
Where are lofty roofed temples, and statues well carven and fair;
Where are feasts to the happy immortals
When the sacred procession draws near,
Where garlands make bright the bright portals
At all seasons and months in the year;
And when spring days are here,
Then we tread to the wine-god a measure,
In Bacchanal dance and in pleasure,
'Mid the contests of sweet singing choirs,
And the crash of loud lyres.

ΘΡΗΝΩΙΔΙΑ

(Eur. *Hec.*, 444–483)

Song sung by captive women of Troy on the sea beach at Aulis, while the Achæans were there storm-bound through the wrath of dishonoured Achilles, and waiting for a fair wind to bring them home.

ΣΤΡΟΦΗ

O FAIR wind blowing from the sea!
Who through the dark and mist dost guide
The ships that on the billows ride,
Unto what land, ah, misery!
Shall I be borne, across what stormy wave
Or to whose house a purchased slave?

O sea-wind blowing fair and fast
Is it unto the Dorian strand,
Or to those far and fabled shores,
Where great Apidanus outpours
His streams upon the fertile land,
Or shall I tread the Phthian sand,
Borne by the swift breath of the blast?

ΑΝΤΙΣΤΡΟΦΗ

O blowing wind! you bring my sorrow near,
For surely borne with splashing of the oar,
And hidden in some galley-prison drear
I shall be led unto that distant shore
Where the tall palm-tree first took root, and made,
With clustering laurel leaves, a pleasant shade
For Leto when with travail great she bore
A god and goddess in Love's bitter fight,
Her body's anguish, and her soul's delight.

It may be in Delos,
Encircled of seas,
I shall sing with some maids
From the Cyclades,
Of Artemis goddess
And queen and maiden,
Sing of the gold
In her hair heavy-laden.
Sing of her hunting,
Her arrows and bow,
And in singing find solace
From weeping and woe.

ΣΤΡΟΦΗ Β

Or it may be my bitter doom
To stand a handmaid at the loom,
In distant Athens of supreme renown;
And weave some wondrous tapestry,
Or work in bright embroidery,
Upon the crocus-flowered robe and saffron-coloured gown,
The flying horses wrought in gold,
The silver chariot onward rolled
That bears Athena through the Town;
Or the warring giants that strove to climb
From earth to heaven to reign as kings,
And Zeus the conquering son of Time
Borne on the hurricane's eagle wings;
And the lightning flame and the bolts that fell
From the risen cloud at the god's behest,
And hurled the rebels to darkness of hell,
To a sleep without slumber or waking or rest.

ΑΝΤΙΣΤΡΟΦΗ Β

Alas! our children's sorrow, and their pain
In slavery.
Alas! our warrior sires nobly slain
For liberty.
Alas! our country's glory, and the name
Of Troy's fair town;
By the lances and the fighting and the flame
Tall Troy is down.

I shall pass with my soul over-laden,
To a land far away and unseen,
For Asia is slave and handmaiden,
Europa is Mistress and Queen.
Without love, or love's holiest treasure,
I shall pass into Hades abhorred,
To the grave as my chamber of pleasure,
To death as my Lover and Lord.

A FRAGMENT FROM THE AGAMEMNON OF ÆSCHYLOS

(Lines 1140–1173)

[The scene is the court-yard of the Palace at Argos. Agamemnon has already entered the House of Doom, and Clytemnestra has followed close on his heels. Cassandra is left alone upon the stage. The conscious terror of death and the burden of prophecy lie heavy upon her; terrible signs and visions greet her approach. She sees blood upon the lintel, and the smell of blood scares her, as some bird, from the door. The ghosts of the murdered children come to mourn with her. Her second sight pierces the Palace walls; she sees the fatal bath, the trammelling net, and the axe sharpened for her own ruin and her lord's.

But not even in the hour of her last anguish is Apollo merciful; her warnings are unheeded, her prophetic utterances made mock of.

The orchestra is filled with a chorus of old men weak, foolish, irresolute. They do not believe the weird woman of mystery till the hour for help is past, and the cry of Agamemnon echoes from the house, 'Oh me! I am stricken with a stroke of death.']

CHORUS

THY prophecies are but a lying tale,
For cruel gods have brought thee to this state,
And of thyself and thine own wretched fate
Sing you this song and these unhallowed lays,
Like the brown bird of grief insatiate
Crying for sorrow of its dreary days;
Crying for Itys, Itys, in the vale—
The nightingale! The nightingale!

CASSANDRA

Yet I would that to me they had given
The fate of that singer so clear,
Fleet wings to fly up into heaven,
Away from all mourning and fear;
For ruin and slaughter await me—the cleaving
with sword and the spear.

CHORUS

Whence come these crowding fancies on thy brain,
Sent by some god it may be, yet for naught?
Why dost thou sing with evil-tongued refrain,
Moulding thy terrors to this hideous strain
With shrill, sad cries, as if by death distraught?
Why dost thou tread that path of prophecy,
Where, upon either hand,
Landmarks for ever stand
With horrid legend for all men to see?

CASSANDRA

O bitter bridegroom who didst bear
Ruin to those that loved thee true!
O holy stream Scamander, where
With gentle nurturement I grew
In the first days, when life and love were new.

And now—and now—it seems that I must lie
In the dark land that never sees the sun;
Sing my sad songs of fruitless prophecy
By the black stream Cokytos that doth run
Through long, low hills of dreary Acheron.

CHORUS

Ah, but thy word is clear!
Even a child among men,
Even a child might see
What is lying hidden here.
Ah! I am smitten deep
To the heart with a deadly blow
At the evil fate of the maid,
At the cry of her song of woe!
Sorrows for her to bear!
Wonders for me to hear!

CASSANDRA

O my poor land laid waste with flame and fire!
O ruined city overthrown by fate!
Ah, what availed the offerings of my Sire
To keep the foreign foemen from the gate!
Ah, what availed the herds of pasturing kine
To save my country from the wrath divine!

Ah, neither prayer nor priest availèd aught,
Nor the strong captains that so stoutly fought,
For the tall town lies desolate and low.
And I, the singer of this song of woe,
Know, by the fire burning in my brain,
That Death, the healer of all earthly pain,
Is close at hand! I will not shirk the blow.

SAN ARTYSTY
OR, THE ARTIST'S DREAM

TRANSLATED FROM THE POLISH
OF MADAME HELENA MODJESKA

I TOO have had my dreams: ay, known indeed
The crowded visions of a fiery youth
Which haunt me still.

. . . . . .

Methought that once I lay
Within some garden close, what time the Spring
Breaks like a bird from Winter, and the sky
Is sapphire-vaulted. The pure air was soft,
And the deep grass I lay on soft as air.
The strange and secret life of the young trees
Swelled in the green and tender bark, or burst
To buds of sheathèd emerald; violets
Peered from their nooks of hiding, half afraid
Of their own loveliness; the vermeil rose
Opened its heart, and the bright star-flower
Shone like a star of morning. Butterflies,
In painted liveries of brown and gold,
Took the shy bluebells as their pavilions

And seats of pleasaunce; overhead a bird
Made snow of all the blossoms as it flew
To charm the woods with singing: the whole world
Seemed waking to delight!
And yet—and yet—
My soul was filled with leaden heaviness:
I had no joy in Nature; what to me,
Ambition's slave, was crimson-stainèd rose
Or the gold-sceptred crocus? The bright bird
Sang out of tune for me, and the sweet flowers
Seemed but a pageant, and an unreal show
That mocked my heart; for, like the fabled snake
That stings itself to anguish, so I lay
Self-tortured, self-tormented.
The day crept
Unheeded on the dial, till the sun
Dropt, purple-sailed, into the gorgeous East,
When, from the fiery heart of that great orb,
Came One whose shape of beauty far outshone
The most bright vision of this common earth.
Girt was she in a robe more white than flame
Or furnace-heated brass; upon her head
She bare a laurel crown, and, like a star
That falls from the high heaven suddenly,
Passed to my side.
Then kneeling low, I cried
'O much-desired! O long-waited for!
Immortal Glory! Great world-conqueror!
Oh, let me not die crownless; once, at least,
Let thine imperial laurels bind my brows,
Ignoble else. Once let the clarion note
And trump of loud ambition sound my name,

And for the rest I care not.'
Then to me,
In gentle voice, the angel made reply:
'Child, ignorant of the true happiness,
Nor knowing life's best wisdom, thou wert made
For light and love and laughter, not to waste
Thy youth in shooting arrows at the sun,
Or nurturing that ambition in thy soul
Whose deadly poison will infect thy heart,
Marring all joy and gladness! Tarry here
In the sweet confines of this garden-close
Whose level meads and glades delectable
Invite for pleasure; the wild bird that wakes
These silent dells with sudden melody
Shall be thy playmate; and each flower that blows
Shall twine itself unbidden in thy hair—
Garland more meet for thee than the dread weight
Of Glory's laurel wreath.'
'Ah! fruitless gifts,'
I cried, unheeding of her prudent word,
'Are all such mortal flowers, whose brief lives
Are bounded by the dawn and setting sun.
The anger of the noon can wound the rose,
And the rain robs the crocus of its gold;
But thine immortal coronal of Fame,
Thy crown of deathless laurel, this alone
Age cannot harm, nor winter's icy tooth
Pierce to its hurt, nor common things profane.'
No answer made the angel, but her face
Dimmed with the mists of pity.
Then methought
That from mine eyes, wherein ambition's torch

Burned with its latest and most ardent flame,
Flashed forth two level beams of straitened light,
Beneath whose fulgent fires the laurel crown
Twisted and curled, as when the Sirian star
Withers the ripening corn, and one pale leaf
Fell on my brow; and I leapt up and felt
The mighty pulse of Fame, and heard far off
The sound of many nations praising me!

. . . . . .

One fiery-coloured moment of great life!
And then—how barren was the nations' praise!
How vain the trump of Glory! Bitter thorns
Were in that laurel leaf, whose toothèd barbs
Burned and bit deep till fire and red flame
Seemed to feed full upon my brain, and make
The garden a bare desert.
With wild hands
I strove to tear it from my bleeding brow,
But all in vain; and with a dolorous cry
That paled the lingering stars before their time,
I waked at last, and saw the timorous dawn
Peer with grey face into my darkened room,
And would have deemed it a mere idle dream
But for this restless pain that gnaws my heart,
And the red wounds of thorns upon my brow.

THE SPHINX

To

Marcel Schwob

IN FRIENDSHIP

AND

IN ADMIRATION

THE SPHINX

IN a dim corner of my room for longer than my
fancy thinks
A beautiful and silent Sphinx has watched me
through the shifting gloom.

Inviolate and immobile she does not rise, she does
not stir
For silver moons are naught to her and naught to
her the suns that reel.

Red follows grey across the air, the waves of
moonlight ebb and flow
But with the Dawn she does not go and in the
night-time she is there.

Dawn follows Dawn and Nights grow old and all
the while this curious cat
Lies couching on the Chinese mat with eyes of
satin rimmed with gold.

Upon the mat she lies and leers and on the tawny
throat of her
Flutters the soft and silky fur or ripples to her
pointed ears.

Come forth, my lovely seneschal! so somnolent,
so statuesque!
Come forth you exquisite grotesque! half woman
and half animal!

Come forth my lovely languorous Sphinx! and put
your head upon my knee!
And let me stroke your throat and see your body
spotted like the Lynx!

And let me touch those curving claws of yellow
ivory and grasp
The tail that like a monstrous Asp coils round
your heavy velvet paws!

A THOUSAND weary centuries are thine while I have hardly seen
Some twenty summers cast their green for Autumn's gaudy liveries.

But you can read the Hieroglyphs on the great sandstone obelisks,
And you have talked with Basilisks, and you have looked on Hippogriffs.

O tell me, were you standing by when Isis to Osiris knelt?
And did you watch the Egyptian melt her union for Antony

And drink the jewel-drunken wine and bend her head in mimic awe
To see the huge proconsul draw the salted tunny from the brine?

And did you mark the Cyprian kiss white Adon on his catafalque?
And did you follow Amenalk, the God of Heliopolis?

And did you talk with Thoth, and did you hear the moon-horned Io weep?
And know the painted kings who sleep beneath the wedge-shaped Pyramid?

LIFT up your large black satin eyes which are
like cushions where one sinks!
Fawn at my feet, fantastic Sphinx! and sing me
all your memories!

Sing to me of the Jewish maid who wandered
with the Holy Child,
And how you led them through the wild, and
how they slept beneath your shade.

Sing to me of that odorous green eve when couching
by the marge
You heard from Adrian's gilded barge the laughter
of Antinous

And lapped the stream and fed your drouth and
watched with hot and hungry stare
The ivory body of that rare young slave with his
pomegranate mouth!

Sing to me of the Labyrinth in which the
twy-formed bull was stalled!
Sing to me of the night you crawled across the
temple's granite plinth

When through the purple corridors the screaming
scarlet Ibis flew
In terror, and a horrid dew dripped from the
moaning Mandragores,

And the great torpid crocodile within the tank
shed slimy tears,
And tare the jewels from his ears and staggered
back into the Nile,

And the priests cursed you with shrill psalms as
in your claws you seized their snake
And crept away with it to slake your passion by
the shuddering palms.

WHO were your lovers? who were they who
wrestled for you in the dust?
Which was the vessel of your Lust? What Leman
had you, every day?

Did giant Lizards come and crouch before you on
the reedy banks?
Did Gryphons with great metal flanks leap on
you in your trampled couch?

Did monstrous hippopotami come sidling toward
you in the mist?
Did gilt-scaled dragons writhe and twist with pas-
sion as you passed them by?

And from the brick-built Lycian tomb what hor-
rible Chimera came
With fearful heads and fearful flame to breed new
wonders from your womb?

OR had you shameful secret quests and did you hurry to your home
Some Nereid coiled in amber foam with curious rock crystal breasts?

Or did you treading through the froth call to the brown Sidonian
For tidings of Leviathan, Leviathan or Behemoth?

Or did you when the sun was set climb up the cactus-covered slope
To meet your swarthy Ethiop whose body was of polished jet?

Or did you while the earthen skiffs dropped down the grey Nilotic flats
At twilight and the flickering bats flew round the temple's triple glyphs

Steal to the border of the bar and swim across the silent lake
And slink into the vault and make the Pyramid your lúpanar

Till from each black sarcophagus rose up the painted swathèd dead?
Or did you lure unto your bed the ivory-horned Tragelaphos?

Or did you love the god of flies who plagued the
Hebrews and was splashed
With wine unto the waist? or Pasht, who had
green beryls for her eyes?

Or that young god, the Tyrian, who was more
amorous than the dove
Of Ashtaroth? or did you love the god of the
Assyrian

Whose wings, like strange transparent talc, rose
high above his hawk-faced head,
Painted with silver and with red and ribbed with
rods of Oreichalch?

Or did huge Apis from his car leap down and lay
before your feet
Big blossoms of the honey-sweet and honey-
coloured nenuphar?

HOW subtle-secret is your smile! Did you love none then? Nay, I know
Great Ammon was your bedfellow! He lay with you beside the Nile!

The river-horses in the slime trumpeted when they saw him come
Odorous with Syrian galbanum and smeared with spikenard and with thyme.

He came along the river bank like some tall galley argent-sailed,
He strode across the waters, mailed in beauty, and the waters sank.

He strode across the desert sand: he reached the valley where you lay:
He waited till the dawn of day: then touched your black breasts with his hand.

You kissed his mouth with mouths of flame: you made the hornèd god your own:
You stood behind him on his throne: you called him by his secret name.

You whispered monstrous oracles into the caverns of his ears:
With blood of goats and blood of steers you taught him monstrous miracles.

White Ammon was your bedfellow! Your chamber was the steaming Nile!
And with your curved archaic smile you watched his passion come and go.

WITH Syrian oils his brows were bright: and wide-spread as a tent at noon
His marble limbs made pale the moon and lent the day a larger light.

His long hair was nine cubits' span and coloured like that yellow gem
Which hidden in their garment's hem the merchants bring from Kurdistan.

His face was as the must that lies upon a vat of new-made wine:
The seas could not insapphirine the perfect azure of his eyes.

His thick soft throat was white as milk and threaded with the veins of blue:
And curious pearls like frozen dew were broidered on his flowing silk.

ON pearl and porphyry pedestalled he was too
bright to look upon:
For on his ivory breast there shone the wondrous
ocean-emerald,

That mystic moonlit jewel which some diver of
the Colchian caves
Had found beneath the blackening waves and
carried to the Colchian witch.

Before his gilded galiot ran naked vine-wreathed
corybants,
And lines of swaying elephants knelt down to
draw his chariot,

And lines of swarthy Nubians bare up his litter
as he rode
Down the great granite-paven road between the
nodding peacock-fans.

The merchants brought him steatite from Sidon
in their painted ships:
The meanest cup that touched his lips was
fashioned from a chrysolite.

The merchants brought him cedar chests of rich
apparel bound with cords:
His train was borne by Memphian lords: young
kings were glad to be his guests.

Ten hundred shaven priests did bow to Ammon's
altar day and night,
Ten hundred lamps did wave their light through
Ammon's carven house—and now

Foul snake and speckled adder with their young
ones crawl from stone to stone
For ruined is the house and prone the great
rose-marble monolith!

Wild ass or trotting jackal comes and couches in
the mouldering gates:
Wild satyrs call unto their mates across the fallen
fluted drums.

And on the summit of the pile the blue-faced ape
of Horus sits
And gibbers while the fig-tree splits the pillars of
the peristyle.

THE god is scattered here and there: deep hidden in the windy sand
I saw his giant granite hand still clenched in impotent despair.

And many a wandering caravan of stately negroes silken-shawled,
Crossing the desert, halts appalled before the neck that none can span.

And many a bearded Bedouin draws back his yellow-striped burnous
To gaze upon the Titan thews of him who was thy paladin.

GO, seek his fragments on the moor and wash
them in the evening dew,
And from their pieces make anew thy mutilated
paramour!

Go, seek them where they lie alone and from their
broken pieces make
Thy bruisèd bedfellow! And wake mad passions
in the senseless stone!

Charm his dull ear with Syrian hymns! he loved
your body! oh, be kind,
Pour spikenard on his hair, and wind soft rolls of
linen round his limbs!

Wind round his head the figured coins! stain with
red fruits those pallid lips!
Weave purple for his shrunken hips! and purple
for his barren loins!

AWAY to Egypt! Have no fear. Only one God has ever died.
Only one God has let His side be wounded by a soldier's spear.

But these, thy lovers, are not dead. Still by the hundred-cubit gate
Dog-faced Anubis sits in state with lotus-lilies for thy head.

Still from his chair of porphyry gaunt Memnon strains his lidless eyes
Across the empty land, and cries each yellow morning unto thee.

And Nilus with his broken horn lies in his black and oozy bed
And till thy coming will not spread his waters on the withering corn.

Your lovers are not dead, I know. They will rise up and hear your voice
And clash their cymbals and rejoice and run to kiss your mouth! And so,

Set wings upon your argosies! Set horses to your ebon car!
Back to your Nile! Or if you are grown sick of dead divinities

Follow some roving lion's spoor across the copper-coloured plain,
Reach out and hale him by the mane and bid him be your paramour!

Couch by his side upon the grass and set your white teeth in his throat
And when you hear his dying note lash your long flanks of polished brass

And take a tiger for your mate, whose amber sides are flecked with black,
And ride upon his gilded back in triumph through the Theban gate,

And toy with him in amorous jests, and when he turns, and snarls, and gnaws,
O smite him with your jasper claws! and bruise him with your agate breasts!

WHY are you tarrying? Get hence! I weary of your sullen ways,
I weary of your steadfast gaze, your somnolent magnificence.

Your horrible and heavy breath makes the light flicker in the lamp,
And on my brow I feel the damp and dreadful dews of night and death.

Your eyes are like fantastic moons that shiver in some stagnant lake,
Your tongue is like a scarlet snake that dances to fantastic tunes,

Your pulse makes poisonous melodies, and your black throat is like the hole
Left by some torch or burning coal on Saracenic tapestries.

Away! The sulphur-coloured stars are hurrying through the Western gate!
Away! Or it may be too late to climb their silent silver cars!

See, the dawn shivers round the grey gilt-dialled towers, and the rain
Streams down each diamonded pane and blurs with tears the wannish day.

What snake-tressed fury fresh from Hell, with uncouth gestures and unclean,
Stole from the poppy-drowsy queen and led you to a student's cell?

WHAT songless tongueless ghost of sin crept
through the curtains of the night,
And saw my taper burning bright, and knocked,
and bade you enter in.

Are there not others more accursed, whiter with
leprosies than I?
Are Abana and Pharphar dry that you come here
to slake your thirst?

Get hence, you loathsome mystery! Hideous
animal, get hence!
You wake in me each bestial sense, you make me
what I would not be.

You make my creed a barren sham, you wake
foul dreams of sensual life,
And Atys with his blood-stained knife were better
than the thing I am.

False Sphinx! False Sphinx! By reedy Styx old
Charon, leaning on his oar,
Waits for my coin. Go thou before, and leave
me to my crucifix,

Whose pallid burden, sick with pain, watches the
world with wearied eyes,
And weeps for every soul that dies, and weeps for
every soul in vain.

THE BALLAD OF READING GAOL

IN MEMORIAM

C. T. W.

SOMETIME TROOPER OF THE ROYAL HORSE GUARDS

OBIIT H.M. PRISON, READING, BERKSHIRE

JULY 7, 1896

THE BALLAD OF READING GAOL

I

HE did not wear his scarlet coat,
For blood and wine are red,
And blood and wine were on his hands
When they found him with the dead,
The poor dead woman whom he loved,
And murdered in her bed.

He walked amongst the Trial Men
In a suit of shabby grey;
A cricket cap was on his head,
And his step seemed light and gay;
But I never saw a man who looked
So wistfully at the day.

I never saw a man who looked
With such a wistful eye
Upon that little tent of blue
Which prisoners call the sky,
And at every drifting cloud that went
With sails of silver by.

I walked, with other souls in pain,
Within another ring,
And was wondering if the man had done
A great or little thing,
When a voice behind me whispered low,
'*That fellow's got to swing.*'

Dear Christ! the very prison walls
Suddenly seemed to reel,
And the sky above my head became
Like a casque of scorching steel;
And, though I was a soul in pain,
My pain I could not feel.

I only knew what hunted thought
Quickened his step, and why
He looked upon the garish day
With such a wistful eye;
The man had killed the thing he loved,
And so he had to die.

. . . . . .

Yet each man kills the thing he loves,
By each let this be heard,
Some do it with a bitter look,
Some with a flattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss,
The brave man with a sword!

Some kill their love when they are young,
And some when they are old;
Some strangle with the hands of Lust,
Some with the hands of Gold:
The kindest use a knife, because
The dead so soon grow cold.

Some love too little, some too long,
Some sell, and others buy;
Some do the deed with many tears,
And some without a sigh:
For each man kills the thing he loves,
Yet each man does not die.

He does not die a death of shame
On a day of dark disgrace,
Nor have a noose about his neck,
Nor a cloth upon his face,
Nor drop feet foremost through the floor
Into an empty space.

. . . . . .

He does not sit with silent men
Who watch him night and day;
Who watch him when he tries to weep,
And when he tries to pray;
Who watch him lest himself should rob
The prison of its prey.

He does not wake at dawn to see
  Dread figures throng his room,
The shivering Chaplain robed in white,
  The Sheriff stern with gloom,
And the Governor all in shiny black,
  With the yellow face of Doom.

He does not rise in piteous haste
  To put on convict-clothes,
While some coarse-mouthed Doctor gloats, and notes
  Each new and nerve-twitched pose,
Fingering a watch whose little ticks
  Are like horrible hammer-blows.

He does not know that sickening thirst
  That sands one's throat, before
The hangman with his gardener's gloves
  Slips through the padded door,
And binds one with three leathern thongs,
  That the throat may thirst no more.

He does not bend his head to hear
  The Burial Office read,
Nor, while the terror of his soul
  Tells him he is not dead,
Cross his own coffin, as he moves
  Into the hideous shed.

He does not stare upon the air
Through a little roof of glass:
He does not pray with lips of clay
For his agony to pass;
Nor feel upon his shuddering cheek
The kiss of Caiaphas.

II

SIX weeks our guardsman walked the yard,
In the suit of shabby grey:
His cricket cap was on his head,
And his step seemed light and gay,
But I never saw a man who looked
So wistfully at the day.

I never saw a man who looked
With such a wistful eye
Upon that little tent of blue
Which prisoners call the sky,
And at every wandering cloud that trailed
Its ravelled fleeces by.

He did not wring his hands, as do
Those witless men who dare
To try to rear the changeling Hope
In the cave of black Despair:
He only looked upon the sun,
And drank the morning air.

He did not wring his hands nor weep,
Nor did he peek or pine,
But he drank the air as though it held
Some healthful anodyne;
With open mouth he drank the sun
As though it had been wine!

And I and all the souls in pain,
Who tramped the other ring,
Forgot if we ourselves had done
A great or little thing,
And watched with gaze of dull amaze
The man who had to swing.

And strange it was to see him pass
With a step so light and gay,
And strange it was to see him look
So wistfully at the day,
And strange it was to think that he
Had such a debt to pay.

. . . . . .

For oak and elm have pleasant leaves
That in the spring-time shoot:
But grim to see is the gallows-tree,
With its adder-bitten root,
And, green or dry, a man must die
Before it bears its fruit!

The loftiest place is that seat of grace
For which all worldlings try:
But who would stand in hempen band
Upon a scaffold high,
And through a murderer's collar take
His last look at the sky?

It is sweet to dance to violins
  When Love and Life are fair:
To dance to flutes, to dance to lutes
  Is delicate and rare:
But it is not sweet with nimble feet
  To dance upon the air!

So with curious eyes and sick surmise
  We watched him day by day,
And wondered if each one of us
  Would end the self-same way,
For none can tell to what red Hell
  His sightless soul may stray.

At last the dead man walked no more
  Amongst the Trial Men,
And I knew that he was standing up
  In the black dock's dreadful pen,
And that never would I see his face
  In God's sweet world again.

Like two doomed ships that pass in storm
  We had crossed each other's way:
But we made no sign, we said no word,
  We had no word to say;
For we did not meet in the holy night,
  But in the shameful day.

A prison wall was round us both,
Two outcast men we were:
The world had thrust us from its heart,
And God from out His care:
And the iron gin that waits for Sin
Had caught us in its snare.

III

IN Debtors' Yard the stones are hard,
And the dripping wall is high,
So it was there he took the air
Beneath the leaden sky,
And by each side a Warder walked,
For fear the man might die.

Or else he sat with those who watched
His anguish night and day;
Who watched him when he rose to weep,
And when he crouched to pray;
Who watched him lest himself should rob
Their scaffold of its prey.

The Governor was strong upon
The Regulations Act:
The Doctor said that Death was but
A scientific fact:
And twice a day the Chaplain called,
And left a little tract.

And twice a day he smoked his pipe,
And drank his quart of beer:
His soul was resolute, and held
No hiding-place for fear;
He often said that he was glad
The hangman's hands were near.

But why he said so strange a thing
No Warder dared to ask:
For he to whom a watcher's doom
Is given as his task,
Must set a lock upon his lips,
And make his face a mask.

Or else he might be moved, and try
To comfort or console:
And what should Human Pity do
Pent up in Murderers' Hole?
What word of grace in such a place
Could help a brother's soul?

. . . . . .

With slouch and swing around the ring
We trod the Fools' Parade!
We did not care: we knew we were
The Devil's Own Brigade:
And shaven head and feet of lead
Make a merry masquerade.

We tore the tarry rope to shreds
With blunt and bleeding nails;
We rubbed the doors, and scrubbed the floors,
And cleaned the shining rails:
And, rank by rank, we soaped the plank,
And clattered with the pails.

We sewed the sacks, we broke the stones,
  We turned the dusty drill:
We banged the tins, and bawled the hymns,
  And sweated on the mill:
But in the heart of every man
  Terror was lying still.

So still it lay that every day
  Crawled like a weed-clogged wave:
And we forgot the bitter lot
  That waits for fool and knave,
Till once, as we tramped in from work,
  We passed an open grave.

With yawning mouth the yellow hole
  Gaped for a living thing;
The very mud cried out for blood
  To the thirsty asphalte ring:
And we knew that ere one dawn grew fair
  Some prisoner had to swing.

Right in we went, with soul intent
  On Death and Dread and Doom:
The hangman, with his little bag,
  Went shuffling through the gloom:
And each man trembled as he crept
  Into his numbered tomb.

. . . . . .

That night the empty corridors
Were full of forms of Fear,
And up and down the iron town
Stole feet we could not hear,
And through the bars that hide the stars
White faces seemed to peer.

He lay as one who lies and dreams
In a pleasant meadow-land,
The watchers watched him as he slept,
And could not understand
How one could sleep so sweet a sleep
With a hangman close at hand.

But there is no sleep when men must weep
Who never yet have wept:
So we—the fool, the fraud, the knave—
That endless vigil kept,
And through each brain on hands of pain
Another's terror crept.

Alas! it is a fearful thing
To feel another's guilt!
For, right within, the sword of Sin
Pierced to its poisoned hilt,
And as molten lead were the tears we shed
For the blood we had not spilt.

The Warders with their shoes of felt
  Crept by each padlocked door,
And peeped and saw, with eyes of awe,
  Grey figures on the floor,
And wondered why men knelt to pray
  Who never prayed before.

All through the night we knelt and prayed,
  Mad mourners of a corse!
The troubled plumes of midnight were
  The plumes upon a hearse:
And bitter wine upon a sponge
  Was the savour of Remorse.

. . . . . .

The grey cock crew, the red cock crew,
  But never came the day:
And crooked shapes of Terror crouched,
  In the corners where we lay:
And each evil sprite that walks by night
  Before us seemed to play.

They glided past, they glided fast,
  Like travellers through a mist:
They mocked the moon in a rigadoon
  Of delicate turn and twist,
And with formal pace and loathsome grace
  The phantoms kept their tryst.

With mop and mow, we saw them go,
Slim shadows hand in hand:
About, about, in ghostly rout
They trod a saraband:
And the damned grotesques made arabesques,
Like the wind upon the sand!

With the pirouettes of marionettes,
They tripped on pointed tread:
But with flutes of Fear they filled the ear,
As their grisly masque they led,
And loud they sang, and long they sang,
For they sang to wake the dead.

'Oho!' they cried, *'The world is wide,*
But fettered limbs go lame!
And once, or twice, to throw the dice
Is a gentlemanly game,
But he does not win who plays with Sin
In the secret House of Shame.'

No things of air these antics were,
That frolicked with such glee:
To men whose lives were held in gyves,
And whose feet might not go free,
Ah! wounds of Christ! they were living things,
Most terrible to see.

Around, around, they waltzed and wound;
Some wheeled in smirking pairs;
With the mincing step of a demirep
Some sidled up the stairs:
And with subtle sneer, and fawning leer,
Each helped us at our prayers.

The morning wind began to moan,
But still the night went on:
Through its giant loom the web of gloom
Crept till each thread was spun:
And, as we prayed, we grew afraid
Of the Justice of the Sun.

The moaning wind went wandering round
The weeping prison-wall:
Till like a wheel of turning steel
We felt the minutes crawl:
O moaning wind! what had we done
To have such a seneschal?

At last I saw the shadowed bars,
Like a lattice wrought in lead,
Move right across the whitewashed wall
That faced my three-plank bed,
And I knew that somewhere in the world
God's dreadful dawn was red.

At six o'clock we cleaned our cells,
  At seven all was still,
But the sough and swing of a mighty wing
  The prison seemed to fill,
For the Lord of Death with icy breath
  Had entered in to kill.

He did not pass in purple pomp,
  Nor ride a moon-white steed.
Three yards of cord and a sliding board
  Are all the gallows' need:
So with rope of shame the Herald came
  To do the secret deed.

We were as men who through a fen
  Of filthy darkness grope:
We did not dare to breathe a prayer,
  Or to give our anguish scope:
Something was dead in each of us,
  And what was dead was Hope.

For Man's grim Justice goes its way,
  And will not swerve aside:
It slays the weak, it slays the strong,
  It has a deadly stride:
With iron heel it slays the strong,
  The monstrous parricide!

We waited for the stroke of eight:
  Each tongue was thick with thirst:
For the stroke of eight is the stroke of Fate
  That makes a man accursed,
And Fate will use a running noose
  For the best man and the worst.

We had no other thing to do,
  Save to wait for the sign to come:
So, like things of stone in a valley lone,
  Quiet we sat and dumb:
But each man's heart beat thick and quick,
  Like a madman on a drum!

With sudden shock the prison-clock
  Smote on the shivering air,
And from all the gaol rose up a wail
  Of impotent despair,
Like the sound that frightened marshes hear
  From some leper in his lair.

And as one sees most fearful things
  In the crystal of a dream,
We saw the greasy hempen rope
  Hooked to the blackened beam,
And heard the prayer the hangman's snare
  Strangled into a scream.

And all the woe that moved him so
  That he gave that bitter cry,
And the wild regrets, and the bloody sweats,
  None knew so well as I:
For he who lives more lives than one
  More deaths than one must die.

IV

THERE is no chapel on the day
On which they hang a man:
The Chaplain's heart is far too sick,
Or his face is far too wan,
Or there is that written in his eyes
Which none should look upon.

So they kept us close till nigh on noon,
And then they rang the bell,
And the Warders with their jingling keys
Opened each listening cell,
And down the iron stair we tramped,
Each from his separate Hell.

Out into God's sweet air we went,
But not in wonted way,
For this man's face was white with fear,
And that man's face was grey,
And I never saw sad men who looked
So wistfully at the day.

I never saw sad men who looked
With such a wistful eye
Upon that little tent of blue
We prisoners called the sky,
And at every careless cloud that passed
In happy freedom by.

But there were those amongst us all
  Who walked with downcast head,
And knew that, had each got his due,
  They should have died instead:
He had but killed a thing that lived,
  Whilst they had killed the dead.

For he who sins a second time
  Wakes a dead soul to pain,
And draws it from its spotted shroud,
  And makes it bleed again,
And makes it bleed great gouts of blood,
  And makes it bleed in vain!

. . . . . .

Like ape or clown, in monstrous garb
  With crooked arrows starred,
Silently we went round and round,
  The slippery asphalte yard;
Silently we went round and round
  And no man spoke a word.

Silently we went round and round,
  And through each hollow mind
The Memory of dreadful things
  Rushed like a dreadful wind,
And Horror stalked before each man,
  And Terror crept behind.

. . . . . .

The Warders strutted up and down,
And kept their herd of brutes,
Their uniforms were spick and span,
And they wore their Sunday suits,
But we knew the work they had been at,
By the quicklime on their boots.

For where a grave had opened wide,
There was no grave at all:
Only a stretch of mud and sand
By the hideous prison-wall,
And a little heap of burning lime,
That the man should have his pall.

For he has a pall, this wretched man,
Such as few men can claim:
Deep down below a prison-yard,
Naked for greater shame,
He lies, with fetters on each foot,
Wrapt in a sheet of flame!

And all the while the burning lime
Eats flesh and bone away,
It eats the brittle bone by night,
And the soft flesh by day,
It eats the flesh and bone by turns,
But it eats the heart alway.

. . . . . .

For three long years they will not sow
Or root or seedling there:
For three long years the unblessed spot
Will sterile be and bare,
And look upon the wondering sky
With unreproachful stare.

They think a murderer's heart would taint
Each simple seed they sow.
It is not true! God's kindly earth
Is kindlier than men know,
And the red rose would but blow more red,
The white rose whiter blow.

Out of his mouth a red, red rose!
Out of his heart a white!
For who can say by what strange way,
Christ brings His will to light,
Since the barren staff the pilgrim bore
Bloomed in the great Pope's sight?

But neither milk-white rose nor red
May bloom in prison air;
The shard, the pebble, and the flint,
Are what they give us there:
For flowers have been known to heal
A common man's despair.

So never will wine-red rose or white,
Petal by petal, fall
On that stretch of mud and sand that lies
By the hideous prison-wall,
To tell the men who tramp the yard
That God's Son died for all.

. . . . . .

Yet though the hideous prison-wall
Still hems him round and round,
And a spirit may not walk by night
That is with fetters bound,
And a spirit may but weep that lies
In such unholy ground,

He is at peace—this wretched man—
At peace, or will be soon:
There is no thing to make him mad,
Nor does Terror walk at noon,
For the lampless Earth in which he lies
Has neither Sun nor Moon.

They hanged him as a beast is hanged:
They did not even toll
A requiem that might have brought
Rest to his startled soul,
But hurriedly they took him out,
And hid him in a hole.

They stripped him of his canvas clothes,
And gave him to the flies:
They mocked the swollen purple throat,
And the stark and staring eyes:
And with laughter loud they heaped the shroud
In which their convict lies.

The Chaplain would not kneel to pray
By his dishonoured grave:
Nor mark it with that blessed Cross
That Christ for sinners gave,
Because the man was one of those
Whom Christ came down to save.

Yet all is well; he has but passed
To life's appointed bourne:
And alien tears will fill for him
Pity's long-broken urn,
For his mourners will be outcast men,
And outcasts always mourn.

V

I KNOW not whether Laws be right,
Or whether Laws be wrong;
All that we know who lie in gaol
Is that the wall is strong;
And that each day is like a year,
A year whose days are long.

But this I know, that every Law
That men have made for Man,
Since first Man took his brother's life,
And the sad world began,
But straws the wheat and saves the chaff
With a most evil fan.

This too I know—and wise it were
If each could know the same—
That every prison that men build
Is built with bricks of shame,
And bound with bars lest Christ should see
How men their brothers maim.

With bars they blur the gracious moon,
And blind the goodly sun:
And they do well to hide their Hell,
For in it things are done
That Son of God nor son of Man
Ever should look upon!

The vilest deeds like poison weeds,
Bloom well in prison-air;
It is only what is good in Man
That wastes and withers there:
Pale Anguish keeps the heavy gate,
And the Warder is Despair.

For they starve the little frightened child
Till it weeps both night and day:
And they scourge the weak, and flog the fool,
And gibe the old and grey,
And some grow mad, and all grow bad,
And none a word may say.

Each narrow cell in which we dwell
Is a foul and dark latrine,
And the fetid breath of living Death
Chokes up each grated screen,
And all, but Lust, is turned to dust
In Humanity's machine.

The brackish water that we drink
Creeps with a loathsome slime,
And the bitter bread they weigh in scales
Is full of chalk and lime,
And Sleep will not lie down, but walks
Wild-eyed, and cries to Time.

. . . . . .

But though lean Hunger and green Thirst
  Like asp with adder fight,
We have little care of prison fare,
  For what chills and kills outright
Is that every stone one lifts by day
  Becomes one's heart by night.

With midnight always in one's heart,
  And twilight in one's cell,
We turn the crank, or tear the rope,
  Each in his separate Hell,
And the silence is more awful far
  Than the sound of a brazen bell.

And never a human voice comes near
  To speak a gentle word:
And the eye that watches through the door
  Is pitiless and hard:
And by all forgot, we rot and rot,
  With soul and body marred.

And thus we rust Life's iron chain
  Degraded and alone:
And some men curse, and some men weep,
  And some men make no moan:
But God's eternal Laws are kind
  And break the heart of stone.

. . . . . .

And every human heart that breaks,
In prison-cell or yard,
Is as that broken box that gave
Its treasure to the Lord,
And filled the unclean leper's house
With the scent of costliest nard.

Ah! happy they whose hearts can break
And peace of pardon win!
How else may man make straight his plan
And cleanse his soul from Sin?
How else but through a broken heart
May Lord Christ enter in?

. . . . .

And he of the swollen purple throat,
And the stark and staring eyes,
Waits for the holy hands that took
The Thief to Paradise;
And a broken and a contrite heart
The Lord will not despise.

The man in red who reads the Law
Gave him three weeks of life,
Three little weeks in which to heal
His soul of his soul's strife,
And cleanse from every blot of blood
The hand that held the knife.

And with tears of blood he cleansed the hand,
The hand that held the steel:
For only blood can wipe out blood,
And only tears can heal:
And the crimson stain that was of Cain
Became Christ's snow-white seal.

VI

IN Reading gaol by Reading town
There is a pit of shame,
And in it lies a wretched man
Eaten by teeth of flame,
In a burning winding-sheet he lies,
And his grave has got no name.

And there, till Christ call forth the dead,
In silence let him lie:
No need to waste the foolish tear,
Or heave the windy sigh:
The man had killed the thing he loved,
And so he had to die.

And all men kill the thing they love,
By all let this be heard,
Some do it with a bitter look,
Some with a flattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss,
The brave man with a sword!

THE END OF
THE BALLAD OF READING GAOL
AND OF
THE POEMS OF OSCAR WILDE

OSCAR WILDE
ON
POETS AND POETRY

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THE TOMB OF KEATS

AS one enters Rome from the Via Ostiensis by the Porta San Paolo, the first object that meets the eye is a marble pyramid which stands close at hand on the left.

There are many Egyptian obelisks in Rome—tall, snakelike spires of red sandstone, mottled with strange writings, which remind us of the pillars of flame which led the children of Israel through the desert away from the land of the Pharaohs; but more wonderful than these to look upon is this gaunt, wedge-shaped pyramid standing here in this Italian city, unshattered amid the ruins and wrecks of time, looking older than the Eternal City itself, like terrible impassiveness turned to stone. And so in the Middle Ages men supposed this to be the sepulchre of Remus, who was slain by his own brother at the founding of the city, so ancient and mysterious it appears; but we have now, perhaps unfortunately, more accurate information about it, and know that it is the tomb of one Caius Cestius, a

Roman gentleman of small note, who died about 30 B.C.

Yet though we cannot care much for the dead man who lies in lonely state beneath it, and who is only known to the world through his sepulchre, still this pyramid will be ever dear to the eyes of all English-speaking people, because at evening its shadows fall on the tomb of one who walks with Spenser, and Shakespeare, and Byron, and Shelley, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning in the great procession of the sweet singers of England.

For at its foot there is a green, sunny slope, known as the Old Protestant Cemetery, and on this a common-looking grave, which bears the following inscription:

"THIS GRAVE CONTAINS

ALL THAT WAS MORTAL OF A YOUNG ENGLISH POET,

WHO ON HIS DEATHBED, IN THE BITTERNESS

OF HIS HEART, DESIRED THESE WORDS

TO BE ENGRAVEN ON HIS TOMBSTONE:

HERE LIES ONE

WHOSE NAME WAS WRIT IN WATER.

February 24, 1821."

And the name of the young English poet is John Keats.

Lord Houghton calls this cemetery "one of the most beautiful spots on which the eye and heart of man can rest," and Shelley speaks of it as making one "in love with death, to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place"; and indeed when I saw the violets and the daisies and the poppies that overgrow the tomb, I remembered how the dead poet had once told his friend that he thought the "intensest pleasure he had received in life was in watching the growth of flowers," and how another time, after lying a while quite still, he murmured in some strange prescience of early death, "I feel the flowers growing over me."

But this time-worn stone and these wildflowers are but poor memorials* of one so great as Keats; most of all, too, in this city of Rome, which pays such honour to her dead; where popes, and emperors, and saints, and cardinals lie hidden in "por-

* Reverently some well-meaning persons have placed a marble slab on the wall of the cemetery with a medallion-profile of Keats on it and some mediocre lines of poetry. The face is ugly, and rather hatchet-shaped, with thick sensual lips, and is utterly unlike the poet himself, who was very beautiful to look upon. "His countenance," says a lady who saw him at one of Hazlitt's lectures, "lives in my mind as one of singular beauty and brightness; it had the expression as if he had been looking on some glorious sight." And this is the idea which Severn's picture of him gives. Even Haydon's rough pen-and-ink sketch of him is better than this "marble libel," which I hope will soon be taken down. I think the best representation of the poet would be a coloured bust, like that of the young Rajah of Koolapoor at Florence, which is a lovely and life-like work of art.

phyry wombs," or couched in baths of jasper and chalcedony and malachite, ablaze with precious stones and metals, and tended with continual service. For very noble is the site, and worthy of a noble monument; behind looms the grey pyramid, symbol of the world's age, and filled with memories of the sphinx, and the lotus leaf, and the glories of old Nile; in front is the Monte Testaccio, built, it is said, with the broken fragments of the vessels in which all the nations of the East and the West brought their tribute to Rome; and a little distance off, along the slope of the hill under the Aurelian wall, some tall gaunt cypresses rise, like burnt-out funeral torches, to mark the spot where Shelley's heart (that "heart of hearts"!) lies in the earth; and, above all, the soil on which we tread is very Rome!

. . . . .

As I stood beside the mean grave of this divine boy, I thought of him as of a Priest of Beauty slain before his time; and the vision of Guido's St. Sebastian came before my eyes as I saw him at Genoa, a lovely brown boy, with crisp, clustering hair and red lips, bound by his evil enemies to a tree, and though pierced by arrows, raising his eyes with divine, impassioned gaze towards the Eternal Beauty of the opening heavens. And thus my thoughts shaped themselves to rhyme:

HEU MISERANDE PUER

Rid of the world's injustice and its pain,
He rests at last beneath God's veil of blue;
Taken from life while life and love were new
The youngest of the martyrs here is lain,
Fair as Sebastian and as foully slain.
No cypress shades his grave, nor funeral yew,
But red-lipped daisies, violets drenched with dew,
And sleepy poppies, catch the evening rain.

O proudest heart that broke for misery!
O saddest poet that the world hath seen!
O sweetest singer of the English land!
Thy name was writ in water on the sand,
But our tears shall keep thy memory green,
And make it flourish like a Basil-tree.

Rome, 1877.

Note.—A later version of this sonnet, containing many changes, under the title of "The Grave of Keats," will be found on page 145.

KEATS'S SONNET ON BLUE

DURING my tour in America I happened one evening to find myself in Louisville, Kentucky. The subject I had selected to speak on was the Mission of Art in the Nineteenth Century, and in the course of my lecture I had occasion to quote Keats's Sonnet on Blue as an example of the poet's delicate sense of colour-harmonies. When my lecture was concluded there came round to see me a lady of middle age, with a sweet gentle manner and a most musical voice. She introduced herself to me as Mrs. Speed, the daughter of George Keats, and invited me to come and examine the Keats manuscripts in her possession. I spent most of the next day with her, reading the letters of Keats to her father, some of which were at that time unpublished, poring over torn yellow

leaves and faded scraps of paper, and wondering at the little Dante in which Keats had written those marvellous notes on Milton. Some months afterwards, when I was in California, I received a letter from Mrs. Speed asking my acceptance of the original manuscript of the sonnet which I had quoted in my lecture. This manuscript I have had reproduced here, as it seems to me to possess much psychological interest. It shows us the conditions that preceded the perfected form, the gradual growth, not of the conception but of the expression, and the workings of that spirit of selection which is the secret of style. In the case of poetry, as in the case of the other arts, what may appear to be simply technicalities of method are in their essence spiritual, not mechanical, and although, in all lovely work, what concerns us is the ultimate form, not the conditions that necessitate that form, yet the preference that precedes perfection, the evolution of the beauty, and the mere making of the music, have, if not their artistic value, at least their value to the artist.

It will be remembered that this sonnet was first published in 1848 by Lord Houghton in his *Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of John Keats.* Lord Houghton does not definitely state where he found it, but it was probably among the Keats manuscripts belonging to Mr. Charles Brown. It is evidently taken from a version later than that in my possession, as it accepts all the corrections, and makes three variations. As in my manuscript

the first line is torn away, I give the sonnet here as it appears in Lord Houghton's edition.

ANSWER TO A SONNET ENDING THUS:

Dark eyes are dearer far
Than those that make the hyacinthine bell.*

By J. H. Reynolds

Blue! 'Tis the life of heaven,—the domain
Of Cynthia,—the wide palace of the sun,—
The tent of Hesperus and all his train,—
The bosomer of clouds, gold, grey and dun.
Blue! 'Tis the life of waters—ocean
And all its vassal streams: pools numberless
May rage, and foam, and fret, but never can
Subside if not to dark-blue nativeness.
Blue! gentle cousin of the forest green,
Married to green in all the sweetest flowers,
Forget-me-not,—the blue-bell,—and, that queen
Of secrecy, the violet: what strange powers
Hast thou, as a mere shadow! But how great,
When in an Eye thou art alive with fate!

Feb. 1818.

In the *Athenæum* of the 3rd of June 1876, appeared a letter from Mr. A. J. Horwood, stating that he had in his possession a copy of *The Garden of Florence* in which this sonnet was transcribed. Mr. Horwood, who was unaware that the sonnet had been already published by Lord Houghton,

* "Make" is of course a mere printer's error for "mock," and was subsequently corrected by Lord Houghton. The sonnet as given in *The Garden of Florence* reads "orbs" for "those."

gives the transcript at length. His version reads *hue* for *life* in the first line, and *bright* for *wide* in the second, and gives the sixth line thus:

With all his tributary streams, pools numberless,

a foot too long: it also reads *to* for *of* in the ninth line. Mr. Buxton Forman is of opinion that these variations are decidedly genuine, but indicative of an earlier state of the poem than that adopted in Lord Houghton's edition. However, now that we have before us Keats's first draft of his sonnet, it is difficult to believe that the sixth line in Mr. Horwood's version is really a genuine variation. Keats may have written,

Ocean
His tributary streams, pools numberless,

and the transcript may have been carelessly made, but having got his line right in his first draft, Keats probably did not spoil it in his second. The *Athenæum* version inserts a comma after *art* in the last line, which seems to me a decided improvement, and eminently characteristic of Keats's method. I am glad to see that Mr. Buxton Forman has adopted it.

As for the corrections that Lord Houghton's version shows Keats to have made in the eighth and ninth lines of this sonnet, it is evident that they sprang from Keats's reluctance to repeat the same word in consecutive lines, except in cases where a word's music or meaning was to be emphasised. The substitution of 'its' for 'his' in the sixth line is more difficult of explanation. It

was due probably to a desire on Keats's part not to mar by any echo the fine personification of Hesperus.

It may be noticed that Keats's own eyes were brown, and not blue, as stated by Mrs. Proctor to Lord Houghton. Mrs. Speed showed me a note to that effect written by Mrs. George Keats on the margin of the page in Lord Houghton's *Life* (p. 100, vol. i.), where Mrs. Proctor's description is given. Cowden Clarke made a similar correction in his *Recollections*, and in some of the later editions of Lord Houghton's book the word 'blue' is struck out. In Severn's portraits of Keats also the eyes are given as brown.

The exquisite sense of colour expressed in the ninth and tenth lines may be paralleled by

> The Ocean with its vastness, its blue green,

of the sonnet to George Keats.

BIOGRAPHIES OF KEATS

A POET, said Keats once, 'is the most unpoetical of all God's creatures', and whether the aphorism be universally true or not, this is certainly the impression produced by the two last biographies that have appeared of Keats himself. It cannot be said that either Mr. Colvin or Mr. William Rossetti makes us love Keats more or understand him better. In both these books there is much that is like 'chaff in the mouth,' and in Mr. Rossetti's there is not a little that is like 'brass on the palate.' To a certain degree this is, no doubt, inevitable nowadays. Everybody pays a penalty for peeping through keyholes, and the keyhole and the backstairs are essential parts of the method of the modern biographers. It is only fair, however, to state at the outset that Mr. Colvin has done his work much better than Mr. Rossetti. The account Mr. Colvin gives of Keats's boyhood, for instance, is very pleasing, and so is the sketch of Keats's circle of friends, both Leigh Hunt and Haydon being

admirably drawn. Here and there, trivial family details are introduced without much regard to proportion, and the posthumous panegyrics of devoted friends are not really of so much value, in helping us to form any true estimate of Keats's actual character, as Mr. Colvin seems to imagine. We have no doubt that when Bailey wrote to Lord Houghton that common-sense and gentleness were Keats's too special characteristics the worthy Archdeacon meant extremely well, but we prefer the real Keats, with his passionate wilfulness, his fantastic moods and his fine inconsistence. Part of Keats's charm as a man is his fascinating incompleteness. We do not want him reduced to a sand-paper smoothness or made perfect by the addition of popular virtues. Still, if Mr. Colvin has not given us a very true picture of Keats's character, he has certainly told the story of his life in a pleasant and readable manner. He may not write with the ease and grace of a man of letters, but he is never pretentious and not often pedantic.

Mr. Rossetti's book is a great failure. To begin with, Mr. Rossetti commits the great mistake of separating the man from the artist. The facts of Keats's life are interesting only when they are shown in their relation to his creative activity. The moment they are isolated they are either uninteresting or painful. Mr. Rossetti complains that the early part of Keats's life is uneventful and the latter part depressing, but the fault lies with the biographer, not with the subject.

The book opens with a detailed account of Keats's life, in which he spares us nothing, from what he calls the 'sexual misadventure at Oxford' down to the six weeks' dissipation after the appearance of the *Blackwood* article and the hysterical and morbid ravings of the dying man. No doubt, most if not all of the things Mr. Rossetti tells us are facts; but there is neither tact shown in the selection that is made of the facts nor sympathy in the use to which they are put. When Mr. Rossetti writes of the man he forgets the poet, and when he criticises the poet he shows that he does not understand the man. His first error, as we have said, is isolating the life from the work; his second error is his treatment of the work itself. Take, for instance, his criticism of that wonderful *Ode to a Nightingale*, with all its marvellous magic of music, colour and form. He begins by saying that 'the first point of weakness' in the poem is the 'surfeit of mythological allusions,' a statement which is absolutely untrue, as out of the eight stanzas of the poem only three contain any mythological allusions at all, and of these not one is either forced or remote. Then coming to the second verse,

> Oh for a draught of vintage, that hath been
> Cool'd a long age in the deep-delvèd earth,
> Tasting of Flora and the country-green,
> Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!

Mr. Rossetti exclaims in a fine fit of 'Blue Ribbon' enthusiasm: 'Surely nobody wants wine as a preparation for enjoying a nightingale's music,

whether in a literal or in a fanciful relation'! 'To call wine "the true, the blushful Hippocrene" . . . seems' to him 'both stilted and repulsive'; 'the phrase "with beaded bubbles winking at the brim" is (though picturesque) trivial'; 'the succeeding image, "Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards" ' is 'far worse'; while such an expression as 'light-winged Dryad of the trees' is an obvious pleonasm, for Dryad really means *Oak*-nymph! As for that superb burst of passion,

> Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
> No hungry generations tread thee down;
> The voice I hear this passing night was heard
> In ancient days by emperor and clown:

Mr. Rossetti tells us that it is a palpable, or rather 'palpaple (*sic*) fact that this address . . . is a logical solecism,' as men live longer than nightingales. As Mr. Colvin makes very much the same criticism, talking of 'a breach of logic which is also . . . a flaw in the poetry,' it may be worth while to point out to these two last critics of Keats's work that what Keats meant to convey was the contrast between the permanence of beauty and the change and decay of human life, an idea which receives its fullest expression in the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. Nor do the other poems fare much better at Mr. Rossetti's hands. The fine invocation in *Isabella*—

> Moan hither, all ye syllables of woe,
> From the deep throat of sad Melpomene!
> Through bronzèd lyre in tragic order go,
> And touch the strings into a mystery,

seems to him 'a *fadeur*'; the Indian Bacchante of the fourth book of *Endymion* he calls a 'sentimental and beguiling wine-bibber,' and, as for Endymion himself, he declares that he cannot understand 'how his human organism, *with respirative and digestive processes*, continues to exist,' and gives us his own idea of how Keats should have treated the subject. An eminent French critic once exclaimed in despair, '*Je trouve des physiologistes partout!*'; but it has been reserved for Mr. Rossetti to speculate on Endymion's digestion, and we readily accord to him all the distinction of the position. Even where Mr. Rossetti seeks to praise, he spoils what he praises. To speak of *Hyperion* as 'a monument of Cyclopean architecture in verse' is bad enough, but to call it 'a Stonehenge of reverberance' is absolutely detestable; nor do we learn much about *The Eve of St. Mark* by being told that its 'simplicity is full-blooded as well as quaint.' What is the meaning, also, of stating that Keats's *Notes on Shakespeare* are 'somewhat strained and *bloated*'? and is there nothing better to be said of Madeline in *The Eve of St. Agnes* than that 'she is made a very charming and loveable figure, *although she does nothing very particular except to undress without looking behind her, and to elope*'? There is no necessity to follow Mr. Rossetti any further as he flounders about through the quagmire that he has made for his own feet. A critic who can say that 'not many of Keats's poems are highly admirable' need not be too seriously

treated. Mr. Rossetti is an industrious man and a painstaking writer, but he entirely lacks the temper necessary for the interpretation of such poetry as was written by John Keats.

It is pleasant to turn again to Mr. Colvin, who criticises always with modesty and often with acumen. We do not agree with him when he accepts Mrs. Owens's theory of a symbolic and allegoric meaning underlying *Endymion*, his final judgment on Keats as 'the most Shakesperean spirit that has lived since Shakespere' is not very fortunate, and we are surprised to find him suggesting, on the evidence of a rather silly story of Severn's, that Sir Walter Scott was privy to the *Blackwood* article. There is nothing, however, about his estimate of the poet's work that is harsh, irritating or uncouth. The true Marcellus of English song has not yet found his Virgil, but Mr. Colvin makes a tolerable Statius.

ENGLISH POETESSES

ENGLAND has given to the world one great poetess, Elizabeth Barrett Browning. By her side Mr. Swinburne would place Miss Christina Rossetti, whose New Year hymn he describes as so much the noblest of sacred poems in our language, that there is none which comes near it enough to stand second. "It is a hymn," he tells us, "touched as with the fire, and bathed as in the light of sunbeams, tuned as to chords and cadences of refluent sea-music beyond reach of harp and organ, large echoes of the serene and sonorous tides of heaven." Much as I admire Miss Rossetti's work, her subtle choice of words, her rich imagery, her artistic naïveté, wherein curious notes of strangeness and simplicity are fantastically blended together, I cannot but think that

Mr. Swinburne has, with noble and natural loyalty, placed her on too lofty a pedestal. To me, she is simply a very delightful artist in poetry. This is indeed something so rare that when we meet it we cannot fail to love it, but it is not everything. Beyond it and above it are higher and more sunlit heights of song, a larger vision, and an ampler air, a music at once more passionate and more profound, a creative energy that is born of the spirit, a winged rapture that is born of the soul, a force and fervour of mere utterance that has all the wonder of the prophet, and not a little of the consecration of the priest.

Mrs. Browning is unapproachable by any woman who has ever touched lyre or blown through reed since the days of the great Æolian poetess. But Sappho, who, to the antique world was a pillar of flame, is to us but a pillar of shadow. Of her poems, burnt with other most precious work by Byzantine Emperor and by Roman Pope, only a few fragments remain. Possibly they lie mouldering in the scented darkness of an Egyptian tomb, clasped in the withered hands of some long-dead lover. Some Greek monk at Athos may even now be poring over an ancient manuscript, whose crabbed characters conceal lyric or ode by her whom the Greeks spoke of as "the Poetess" just as they termed Homer "the Poet," who was to them the tenth Muse, the flower of the Graces, the child of Erôs, and the pride of Hellas—Sappho, with the sweet voice, the bright, beautiful eyes, the dark hyacinth-coloured hair.

But, practically, the work of the marvellous singer of Lesbos is entirely lost to us.

We have a few rose-leaves out of her garden, that is all. Literature nowadays survives marble and bronze, but in old days, in spite of the Roman poet's noble boast, it was not so. The fragile clay vases of the Greeks still keep for us pictures of Sappho, delicately painted in black and red and white; but of her song we have only the echo of an echo.

Of all the women of history, Mrs. Browning is the only one that we could name in any possible or remote conjunction with Sappho.

Sappho was undoubtedly a far more flawless and perfect artist. She stirred the whole antique world more than Mrs. Browning ever stirred our modern age. Never had Love such a singer. Even in the few lines that remain to us the passion seems to scorch and burn. But, as unjust Time, who has crowned her with the barren laurels of fame, has twined with them the dull poppies of oblivion, let us turn from the mere memory of a poetess to one whose song still remains to us as an imperishable glory to our literature; to her who heard the cry of the children from dark mine and crowded factory, and made England weep over its little ones; who, in the feigned sonnets from the Portuguese, sang of the spiritual mystery of Love, and of the intellectual gifts that Love brings to the soul; who had faith in all that is worthy, and enthusiasm for all that is great, and pity for all that suffers; who wrote the *Vision*

of Poets and *Casa Guidi Windows* and *Aurora Leigh.*

As one, to whom I owe my love of poetry no less than my love of country, has said of her:

> Still on our ears
> The clear 'Excelsior' from a woman's lip
> Rings out across the Apennines, although
> The woman's brow lies pale and cold in death
> With all the mighty marble dead in Florence.
> For while great songs can stir the hearts of men,
> Spreading their full vibrations through the world
> In ever-widening circles till they reach
> The Throne of God, and song becomes a prayer,
> And prayer brings down the liberating strength
> That kindles nations to heroic deeds,
> She lives—the great-souled poetess who saw
> From Casa Guidi windows Freedom dawn
> On Italy, and gave the glory back
> In sunrise hymns to all Humanity

She lives indeed, and not alone in the heart of Shakespeare's England, but in the heart of Dante's Italy also. To Greek literature she owed her scholarly culture, but modern Italy created her human passion for Liberty. When she crossed the Alps she became filled with a new ardour, and from that fine, eloquent mouth, that we can still see in her portraits, broke forth such a noble and majestic outburst of lyrical song as had not been heard from woman's lips for more than two thousand years. It is pleasant to think that an English poetess was to a certain extent a real factor in bringing about that unity of Italy that was Dante's dream, and if Florence drove her

great singer into exile, she at least welcomed within her walls the later singer that England had sent to her.

If one were asked the chief qualities of Mrs. Browning's work, one would say, as Mr. Swinburne said of Byron's, its sincerity and its strength. Faults it, of course, possesses. "She would rhyme moon to table," used to be said of her in jest; and certainly no more monstrous rhymes are to be found in all literature than some of those we come across in Mrs. Browning's poems. But her ruggedness was never the result of carelessness. It was deliberate, as her letters to Mr. Horne show very clearly. She refused to sandpaper her muse. She disliked facile smoothness and artificial polish. In her very rejection of art she was an artist. She intended to produce a certain effect by certain means, and she succeeded; and her indifference to complete assonance in rhyme often gives a splendid richness to her verse, and brings into it a pleasurable element of surprise.

In philosophy she was a Platonist, in politics an Opportunist. She attached herself to no particular party. She loved the people when they were kinglike, and kings when they showed themselves to be men. Of the real value and motive of poetry she had a most exalted idea. "Poetry," she says, in the preface of one of her volumes, "has been as serious a thing to me as life itself; and life has been a very serious thing. There has been no playing at skittles for me in either. I never mistook pleasure for the final cause of

poetry, nor leisure for the hour of the poet. I have done my work so far, not as mere hand and head work apart from the personal being, but as the completest expression of that being to which I could attain."

It certainly is her completest expression, and through it she realises her fullest perfection. "The poet," she says elsewhere, "is at once richer and poorer than he used to be; he wears better broadcloth, but speaks no more oracles." These words give us the keynote to her view of the poet's mission. He was to utter Divine oracles, to be at once inspired prophet and holy priest; and as such we may, I think, without exaggeration, conceive her. She was a Sibyl delivering a message to the world, sometimes through stammering lips, and once at least with blinded eyes, yet always with the true fire and fervour of lofty and unshaken faith, always with the great raptures of a spiritual nature, the high ardours of an impassioned soul. As we read her best poems we feel that, though Apollo's shrine be empty and the bronze tripod overthrown, and the vale of Delphi desolate, still the Pythia is not dead. In our own age she has sung for us, and this land gave her new birth. Indeed, Mrs. Browning is the wisest of the Sibyls, wiser even than that mighty figure whom Michael Angelo has painted on the roof of the Sistine Chapel at Rome, poring over the scroll of mystery, and trying to decipher the secrets of Fate; for she realised that, while knowledge is power, suffering is part of knowledge.

To her influence, almost as much as to the higher education of women, I would be inclined to attribute the really remarkable awakening of woman's song that characterises the latter half of our century in England. No country has ever had so many poetesses at once. Indeed, when one remembers that the Greeks had only nine muses, one is sometimes apt to fancy that we have too many. And yet the work done by women in the sphere of poetry is really of a very high standard of excellence. In England we have always been prone to underrate the value of tradition in literature. In our eagerness to find a new voice and a fresh mode of music, we have forgotten how beautiful Echo may be. We look first for individuality and personality, and these are, indeed, the chief characteristics of the masterpieces of our literature, either in prose or verse; but deliberate culture and a study of the best models, if united to an artistic temperament and a nature susceptible of exquisite impressions, may produce much that is admirable, much that is worthy of praise. It would be quite impossible to give a complete catalogue of all the women who since Mrs. Browning's day have tried lute and lyre. Mrs. Pfeiffer, Mrs. Hamilton King, Mrs. Augusta Webster, Graham Tomson, Miss Mary Robinson, Jean Ingelow, Miss May Kendall, Miss Nesbit, Miss May Probyn, Mrs. Craik, Mrs. Meynell, Miss Chapman, and many others have done really good work in poetry, either in the grave Dorian mode of thoughtful and intellec-

tual verse, or in the light and graceful forms of old French song, or in the romantic manner of antique ballad, or in that 'moment's monument,' as Rossetti called it, the intense and concentrated sonnet. Occasionally one is tempted to wish that the quick, artistic faculty that women undoubtedly possess developed itself somewhat more in prose and somewhat less in verse. Poetry is for our highest moods, when we wish to be with the gods, and in our poetry nothing but the very best should satisfy us; but prose is for our daily bread, and the lack of good prose is one of the chief blots on our culture. French prose, even in the hands of the most ordinary writers, is always readable, but English prose is detestable. We have a few, a very few, masters, such as they are. We have Carlyle, who should not be imitated; and Mr. Pater, who, through the subtle perfection of his form, is inimitable absolutely; and Mr. Froude, who is useful; and Matthew Arnold, who is a model; and Mr. George Meredith, who is a warning; and Mr. Lang, who is the divine amateur; and Mr. Stevenson, who is the humane artist; and Mr. Ruskin, whose rhythm and colour and fine rhetoric and marvellous music of words are entirely unattainable. But the general prose that one reads in magazines and in newspapers is terribly dull and cumbrous, heavy in movement and uncouth or exaggerated in expression. Possibly some day our women of letters will apply themselves more definitely to prose.

Their light touch, and exquisite ear, and deli-

cate sense of balance and proportion would be of no small service to us. I can fancy women bringing a new manner into our literature.

However, we have to deal here with women as poetesses, and it is interesting to note that, though Mrs. Browning's influence undoubtedly contributed very largely to the development of this new song-movement, if I may so term it, still there seems to have been never a time during the last three hundred years when the women of this kingdom did not cultivate, if not the art, at least the habit, of writing poetry.

Who the first English poetess was I cannot say. I believe it was the Abbess Juliana Berners, who lived in the fifteenth century; but I have no doubt that Mr. Freeman would be able at a moment's notice to produce some wonderful Saxon or Norman poetess, whose works cannot be read without a glossary, and even with its aid are completely unintelligible. For my own part, I am content with the Abbess Juliana, who wrote enthusiastically about hawking; and after her I would mention Anne Askew, who in prison and on the eve of her fiery martyrdom wrote a ballad that has, at any rate, a pathetic and historical interest. Queen Elizabeth's 'most sweet and sententious ditty' on Mary Stuart is highly praised by Puttenham, a contemporary critic, as an example of 'Exargasia, or the Gorgeous in Literature,' which somehow seems a very suitable epithet for such a great Queen's poems. The term she applies to the unfortunate Queen of

Scots, 'the daughter of debate,' has, of course, long since passed into literature. The Countess of Pembroke, Sir Philip Sidney's sister, was much admired as a poetess in her day.

In 1613 the 'learned, virtuous, and truly noble ladie,' Elizabeth Carew, published a *Tragedie of Marian, the Faire Queene of Jewry*, and a few years later the 'noble ladie Diana Primrose' wrote *A Chain of Pearl*, which is a panegyric on the 'peerless graces' of Gloriana. Mary Morpeth, the friend and admirer of Drummond of Hawthornden; Lady Mary Wroth, to whom Ben Jonson dedicated *The Alchemist;* and the Princess Elizabeth, the sister of Charles I., should also be mentioned.

After the Restoration women applied themselves with still greater ardour to the study of literature and the practice of poetry. Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle, was a true woman of letters, and some of her verses are extremely pretty and graceful. Mrs. Aphra Behn was the first Englishwoman who adopted literature as a regular profession. Mrs. Katharine Philips, according to Mr. Gosse, invented sentimentality. As she was praised by Dryden, and mourned by Cowley, let us hope she may be forgiven. Keats came across her poems at Oxford when he was writing *Endymion*, and found in one of them 'a most delicate fancy of the Fletcher kind'; but I fear nobody reads the Matchless Orinda now. Of Lady Winchelsea's *Nocturnal Reverie* Wordsworth said that, with the exception of Pope's

Windsor Forest, it was the only poem of the period intervening between *Paradise Lost* and Thomson's *Seasons* that contained a single new image of external nature. Lady Rachel Russell, who may be said to have inaugurated the letter-writing literature of England; Eliza Haywood, who is immortalised by the badness of her work, and has a niche in *The Dunciad;* and the Marchioness of Wharton, whose poems Waller said he admired, are very remarkable types, the finest of them being, of course, the first named, who was a woman of heroic mould and of a most noble dignity of nature.

Indeed, though the English poetesses up to the time of Mrs. Browning cannot be said to have produced any work of absolute genius, they are certainly interesting figures, fascinating subjects for study. Amongst them we find Lady Mary Wortley Montague, who had all the caprice of Cleopatra, and whose letters are delightful reading; Mrs. Centlivre, who wrote one brilliant comedy; Lady Anne Barnard, whose *Auld Robin Gray* was described by Sir Walter Scott as 'worth all the dialogues Corydon and Phillis have together spoken from the days of Theocritus downwards,' and is certainly a very beautiful and touching poem; Esther Vanhomrigh and Hester Johnson, the Vanessa and the Stella of Dean Swift's life; Mrs. Thrale, the friend of the great lexicographer; the worthy Mrs. Barbauld; the excellent Mrs. Hannah More; the industrious Joanna Baillie; the admirable Mrs. Chapone,

whose *Ode to Solitude* always fills me with the wildest passion for society, and who will at least be remembered as the patroness of the establishment at which Becky Sharp was educated; Miss Anna Seward, who was called 'The Swan of Lichfield'; poor L. E. L., whom Disraeli described in one of his clever letters to his sister as 'the personification of Brompton—pink satin dress, white satin shoes, red cheeks, snub nose, and her hair *à la* Sappho'; Mrs. Ratcliffe, who introduced the romantic novel, and has consequently much to answer for; the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire, of whom Gibbon said that she was 'made for something better than a Duchess'; the two wonderful sisters, Lady Dufferin and Mrs. Norton; Mrs. Tighe, whose *Psyche* Keats read with pleasure; Constantia Grierson, a marvellous bluestocking in her time; Mrs. Hemans; pretty, charming 'Perdita,' who flirted alternately with poetry and the Prince Regent, played divinely in the *Winter's Tale*, was brutally attacked by Gifford, and has left us a pathetic little poem on the Snowdrop; and Emily Brontë, whose poems are instinct with tragic power, and seem often on the verge of being great.

Old fashions in literature are not so pleasant as old fashions in dress. I like the costume of the age of powder better than the poetry of the age of Pope. But if one adopts the historical standpoint—and this is, indeed, the only standpoint from which we can ever form a fair estimate of work that is not absolutely of the highest order—

we cannot fail to see that many of the English poetesses who preceded Mrs. Browning were women of no ordinary talent, and that if the majority of them looked upon poetry simply as a department of *belles lettres*, so in most cases did their contemporaries. Since Mrs. Browning's day our woods have become full of singing birds, and if I venture to ask them to apply themselves more to prose and less to song, it is not that I like poetical prose, but that I love the prose of poets.

L'ENVOI

ROSE LEAF AND APPLE LEAF

AMONGST the many young men in England who are seeking along with me to continue and to perfect the English Renaissance—*jeunes guerriers du drapeau romantique*, as Gautier would have called us—there is none whose love of art is more flawless and fervent, whose artistic sense of beauty is more subtle and more delicate—none, indeed, who is dearer to myself—than the young poet whose verses I have brought with me to America; verses full of sweet sadness, and yet full of joy; for the most joyous poet is not he who sows the desolate highways of this world with the barren seed of laughter, but he who makes his sorrow most musical, this indeed being the meaning of joy in art—that incommunicable element of artistic delight which, in poetry, for instance, comes from what Keats called the 'sensuous life of verse,' the element of song in the singing, made so pleasurable to us by that wonder of motion which often has its origin in mere musical impulse, and in painting is to be sought for, from the sub-

ject never, but from the pictorial charm only—the scheme and symphony of the colour, the satisfying beauty of the design: so that the ultimate expression of our artistic movement in painting has been, not in the spiritual visions of the Pre-Raphaelites, for all their marvel of Greek legend and their mystery of Italian song, but in the work of such men as Whistler and Albert Moore, who have raised design and colour to the ideal level of poetry and music. For the quality of their exquisite painting comes from the mere inventive and creative handling of line and colour, from a certain form and choice of beautiful workmanship, which, rejecting all literary reminiscence and all metaphysical idea, is in itself entirely satisfying to the æsthetic sense—is, as the Greeks would say, an end in itself; the effect of their work being like the effect given to us by music; for music is the art in which form and matter are always one—the art whose subject cannot be separated from the method of its expression; the art which most completely realises for us the artistic ideal, and is the condition to which all the other arts are constantly aspiring.

Now, this increased sense of the absolutely satisfying value of beautiful workmanship, this recognition of the primary importance of the sensuous element in art, this love of art for art's sake, is the point in which we of the younger school have made a departure from the teaching of Mr. Ruskin,—a departure definite and different and decisive.

Master indeed of the knowledge of all noble living and of the wisdom of all spiritual things will he be to us ever, seeing that it was he who by the magic of his presence and the music of his lips taught us at Oxford that enthusiasm for beauty which is the secret of Hellenism; and that desire for creation which is the secret of life, and filled some of us, at least, with the lofty and passionate ambition to go forth into far and fair lands with some message for the nations and some mission for the world, and yet in his art criticism, his estimate of the joyous element of art, his whole method of approaching art, we are no longer with him; for the keystone to his æsthetic system is ethical always. He would judge of a picture by the amount of noble moral ideas it expresses; but to us the channels by which all noble work in painting can touch, and does touch, the soul are not those of truths of life or metaphysical truths. To him perfection of workmanship seems but the symbol of pride, and incompleteness of technical resource the image of an imagination too limitless to find within the limits of form its complete expression, or of a love too simple not to stammer in its tale. But to us the rule of art is not the rule of morals. In an ethical system, indeed, of any gentle mercy good intentions will, one is fain to fancy, have their recognition; but of those that would enter the serene House of Beauty the question that we ask is not what they had ever meant to do, but what they have done. Their pathetic intentions are of no

value to us, but their realised creations only. *Pour moi je préfère les poètes qui font des vers, les médecins qui sachent guérir, les peintres qui sachent peindre.*

Nor, in looking at a work of art, should we be dreaming of what it symbolises, but rather loving it for what it is. Indeed, the transcendental spirit is alien to the spirit of art. The metaphysical mind of Asia may create for itself the monstrous and many-breasted idol, but to the Greek, pure artist, that work is most instinct with spiritual life which conforms most closely to the perfect facts of physical life also. Nor, in its primary aspect, has a painting, for instance, any more spiritual message or meaning for us than a blue tile from the wall of Damascus, or a Hitzen vase. It is a beautifully coloured surface, nothing more, and affects us by no suggestion stolen from philosophy, no pathos pilfered from literature, no feeling filched from a poet, but by its own incommunicable artistic essence—by that selection of truth which we call style, and that relation of values which is the draughtsmanship of painting, by the whole quality of the workmanship, the arabesque of the design, the splendour of the colour, for these things are enough to stir the most divine and remote of the chords which make music in our soul, and colour, indeed, is of itself a mystical presence on things, and tone a kind of sentiment.

This, then—the new departure of our younger school—is the chief characteristic of Mr. Rennell

Rodd's poetry; for, while there is much in his work that may interest the intellect, much that will excite the emotions, and many-cadenced chords of sweet and simple sentiment—for to those who love Art for its own sake all other things are added—yet, the effect which they pre-eminently seek to produce is purely an artistic one. Such a poem as *The Sea-King's Grave*, with all its majesty of melody as sonorous and as strong as the sea by whose pine-fringed shores it was thus nobly conceived and nobly fashioned; or the little poem that follows it, whose cunning workmanship, wrought with such an artistic sense of limitation, one might liken to the rare chasing of the mirror that is its motive; or *In a Church*, pale flower of one of those exquisite moments when all things except the moment itself seem so curiously real, and when the old memories of forgotten days are touched and made tender, and the familiar place grows fervent and solemn suddenly with a vision of the undying beauty of the gods that died; or the scene in *Chartres Cathedral*, sombre silence brooding on vault and arch, silent people kneeling on the dust of the desolate pavement as the young priest lifts Lord Christ's body in a crystal star, and then the sudden beams of scarlet light that break through the blazoned window and smite on the carven screen, and sudden organ peals of mighty music rolling and echoing from choir to canopy, and from spire to shaft, and over all the clear glad voice of a singing boy, affecting one as a thing

over-sweet, and striking just the right artistic keynote for one's emotions; or *At Lanuvium*, through the music of whose lines one seems to hear again the murmur of the Mantuan bees straying down from their own green valleys and inland streams to find what honeyed amber the sea-flowers might be hiding; or the poem written *In the Coliseum*, which gives one the same artistic joy that one gets watching a handicraftsman at his work, a goldsmith hammering out his gold into those thin plates as delicate as the petals of a yellow rose, or drawing it out into the long wires like tangled sunbeams, so perfect and precious is the mere handling of it; or the little lyric interludes that break in here and there like the singing of a thrush, and are as swift and as sure as the beating of a bird's wing, as light and bright as the apple-blossoms that flutter fitfully down to the orchard grass after a spring shower, and look the lovelier for the rain's tears lying on their dainty veinings of pink and pearl; or the sonnets—for Mr. Rodd is one of those *qui sonnent le sonnet*, as the Ronsardists used to say—that one called *On the Border Hills*, with its fiery wonder of imagination and the strange beauty of its eighth line; or the one which tells of the sorrow of the great king for the little dead child—well, all these poems aim, as I said, at producing a purely artistic effect, and have the rare and exquisite quality that belongs to work of that kind; and I feel that the entire subordination in our æsthetic movement of all merely emotional

and intellectual motives to the vital informing poetic principle is the surest sign of our strength.

But it is not enough that a work of art should conform to the æsthetic demands of the age: there should be also about it, if it is to give us any permanent delight, the impress of a distinct individuality. Whatever work we have in the nineteenth century must rest on the two poles of personality and perfection. And so in this little volume, by separating the earlier and more simple work from the work that is later and stronger and possesses increased technical power and more artistic vision, one might weave these disconnected poems, these stray and scattered threads, into one fiery-coloured strand of life, noting first a boy's mere gladness of being young, with all its simple joy in field and flower, in sunlight and in song, and then the bitterness of sudden sorrow at the ending by Death of one of the brief and beautiful friendships of one's youth, with all those unanswered longings and questionings unsatisfied by which we vex, so uselessly, the marble face of death; the artistic contrast between the discontented incompleteness of the spirit and the complete perfection of the style that expresses it forming the chief element of the æsthetic charm of these particular poems;—and then in the birth of Love, and all the wonder and the fear and the perilous delight of one on whose boyish brows the little wings of love have beaten for the first time; and the love-songs, so dainty and delicate, little swallow-flights of music, and full of such fragrance and freedom that

they might all be sung in the open air and across moving water; and then autumn, coming with its choirless woods and odorous decay and ruined loveliness, Love lying dead; and the sense of the mere pity of it.

One might stop there, for from a young poet one should ask for no deeper chords of life than those that love and friendship make eternal for us; and the best poems in the volume belong clearly to a later time, a time when these real experiences become absorbed and gathered up into a form which seems from such real experiences to be the most alien and the most remote; when the simple expression of joy or sorrow suffices no longer, and lives rather in the stateliness of the cadenced metre, in the music and colour of the linked words, than in any direct utterance; lives, one might say, in the perfection of the form more than in the pathos of the feeling. And yet, after the broken music of love and the burial of love in the autumn woods, we can trace that wandering among strange people, and in lands unknown to us, by which we try so pathetically to heal the hurts of the life we know, and that pure and passionate devotion to Art which one gets when the harsh reality of life has too suddenly wounded one, and is with discontent or sorrow marring one's youth, just as often, I think, as one gets it from any natural joy of living; and that curious intensity of vision by which, in moments of overmastering sadness and despair ungovernable, artistic things will live in one's memory with a vivid realism caught

from the life which they help one to forget—an old grey tomb in Flanders with a strange legend on it, making one think how, perhaps, passion does live on after death; a necklace of blue and amber beads and a broken mirror found in a girl's grave at Rome, a marble image of a boy habited like Erôs, and with the pathetic tradition of a great king's sorrow lingering about it like a purple shadow,—over all these the tired spirit broods with that calm and certain joy that one gets when one has found something that the ages never dull and the world cannot harm; and with it comes that desire of Greek things which is often an artistic method of expressing one's desire for perfection; and that longing for the old dead days which is so modern, so incomplete, so touching, being, in a way, the inverted torch of Hope, which burns the hand it should guide; and for many things a little sadness, and for all things a great love; and lastly, in the pinewood by the sea, once more the quick and vital pulse of joyous youth leaping and laughing in every line, the frank and fearless freedom of wave and wind waking into fire life's burnt-out ashes and into song the silent lips of pain,—how clearly one seems to see it all, the long colonnade of pines with sea and sky peeping in here and there like a flitting of silver; the open place in the green, deep heart of the wood with the little moss-grown altar to the old Italian god in it; and the flowers all about, cyclamen in the shadowy places, and the stars of the white narcissus lying like snow-flakes over the grass,

where the quick, bright-eyed lizard starts by the stone, and the snake lies coiled lazily in the sun on the hot sand, and overhead the gossamer floats from the branches like thin, tremulous threads of gold,—the scene is so perfect for its motive, for surely here, if anywhere, the real gladness of life might be revealed to one's youth—the gladness that comes, not from the rejection, but from the absorption, of all passion, and is like that serene calm that dwells in the faces of the Greek statues, and which despair and sorrow cannot touch, but intensify only.

In some such way as this we could gather up these strewn and scattered petals of song into one perfect rose of life, and yet, perhaps, in so doing, we might be missing the true quality of the poems; one's real life is so often the life that one does not lead; and beautiful poems, like threads of beautiful silks, may be woven into many patterns and to suit many designs, all wonderful and all different: and romantic poetry, too, is essentially the poetry of impressions, being like that latest school of painting, the school of Whistler and Albert Moore, in its choice of situation as opposed to subject; in its dealing with the exceptions rather than with the types of life; in its brief intensity; in what one might call its fiery-coloured momentariness, it being indeed the momentary situations of life, the momentary aspects of nature, which poetry and painting now seek to render for us. Sincerity and constancy will the artist, indeed, have always; but sincerity in art is merely that plastic perfec-

tion of execution without which a poem or a painting, however noble its sentiment or human its origin, is but wasted and unreal work, and the constancy of the artist cannot be to any definite rule or system of living, but to that principle of beauty only through which the inconstant shadows of his life are in their most fleeting moment arrested and made permanent. He will not, for instance, in intellectual matters acquiesce in that facile orthodoxy of our day which is so reasonable and so artistically uninteresting, nor yet will he desire that fiery faith of the antique time which, while it intensified, yet limited the vision; still less will he allow the calm of his culture to be marred by the discordant despair of doubt or the sadness of a sterile scepticism; for the Valley Perilous, where ignorant armies clash by night, is no resting-place meet for her to whom the gods have assigned the clear upland, the serene height, and the sunlit air,—rather will he be always curiously testing new forms of belief, tinging his nature with the sentiment that still lingers about some beautiful creeds, and searching for experience itself, and not for the fruits of experience; when he has got its secret, he will leave without regret much that was once very precious to him. 'I am always insincere,' says Emerson somewhere, 'as knowing that there are other moods': '*Les émotions*,' wrote Théophile Gautier once in a review of Arsène Houssaye, '*Les émotions ne se ressemblent pas, mais être ému—voilà l'important.*'

Now, this is the secret of the art of the modern

romantic school, and gives one the right keynote for its apprehension; but the real quality of all work which, like Mr. Rodd's, aims, as I said, at a purely artistic effect, cannot be described in terms of intellectual criticism; it is too intangible for that. One can perhaps convey it best in terms of the other arts, and by reference to them; and, indeed, some of these poems are as iridescent and as exquisite as a lovely fragment of Venetian glass; others as delicate in perfect workmanship and as single in natural motive as an etching by Whistler is, or one of those beautiful little Greek figures which in the olive woods round Tanagra men can still find, with the faint gilding and the fading crimson not yet fled from hair and lips and raiment; and many of them seem like one of Corot's twilights just passing into music; for not merely in visible colour, but in sentiment also—which is the colour of poetry—may there be a kind of tone.

But I think that the best likeness to the quality of this young poet's work I ever saw was in the landscape by the Loire. We were staying once, he and I, at Amboise, that little village with its grey slate roofs and steep streets and gaunt, grim gateway, where the quiet cottages nestle like white pigeons into the sombre clefts of the great bastioned rock, and the stately Renaissance houses stand silent and apart—very desolate now, but with some memory of the old days still lingering about the delicately-twisted pillars, and the carved doorways, with their grotesque animals, and laughing masks, and quaint heraldic devices,

all reminding one of a people who could not think life real till they had made it fantastic. And above the village, and beyond the bend of the river, we used to go in the afternoon, and sketch from one of the big barges that bring the wine in autumn and the wood in winter down to the sea, or lie in the long grass and make plans *pour la gloire, et pour ennuyer les philistins*, or wander along the low, sedgy banks, 'matching our reeds in sportive rivalry,' as comrades used in the old Sicilian days; and the land was an ordinary land enough, and bare, too, when one thought of Italy, and how the oleanders were robing the hillsides by Genoa in scarlet, and the cyclamen filling with its purple every valley from Florence to Rome; for there was not much real beauty, perhaps, in it, only long, white dusty roads and straight rows of formal poplars; but, now and then, some little breaking gleam of broken light would lend to the grey field and the silent barn a secret and a mystery that were hardly their own, would transfigure for one exquisite moment the peasants passing down through the vineyard, or the shepherd watching on the hill, would tip the willows with silver and touch the river into gold; and the wonder of the effect, with the strange simplicity of the material, always seemed to me to be a little like the quality of these the verses of my friend.

THE POETS' CORNER

I

AMONG the social problems of the nineteenth century the tramp has always held an important position, but his appearance among the nineteenth-century poets is extremely remarkable. Not that a tramp's mode of life is at all unsuited to the development of the poetic faculty. Far from it! He, if any one, should possess that freedom of mood which is so essential to the artist, for he has no taxes to pay and no relations to worry him. The man who possesses a permanent address, and whose name is to be found in the Directory, is necessarily limited and localised. Only the tramp has absolute liberty of living. Was not Homer himself a vagrant, and did not Thespis go about in a caravan? It is then with feelings of intense expectation that we open the little volume that lies before us. It is entitled *Low Down*, by Two Tramps, and is marvellous even to look at. It is clear that art has at last

reached the criminal classes. The cover is of brown paper like the covers of Mr. Whistler's brochures. The printing exhibits every fantastic variation of type, and the pages range in colour from blue to brown, from grey to sage green and from rose pink to chrome yellow. The Philistines may sneer at this chromatic chaos, but we do not. As the painters are always pilfering from the poets, why should not the poet annex the domain of the painter and use colour for the expression of his moods and music: blue for sentiment, and red for passion, grey for cultured melancholy, and green for descriptions? The book, then, is a kind of miniature rainbow, and with all its varied sheets is as lovely as an advertisement hoarding. As for the peripatetics—alas! they are not nightingales. Their note is harsh and rugged, Mr. G. R. Sims is the god of their idolatry, their style is the style of the Surrey Theatre, and we are sorry to see that that disregard of the rights of property which always characterises the able-bodied vagrant is extended by our tramps from the defensible pilfering from henroosts to the indefensible pilfering from poets. When we read such lines as:

> And builded him a pyramid, four square,
> Open to all the sky and every wind,

we feel that bad as poultry-snatching is, plagiarism is worse. *Facilis descensus Averno!* From highway robbery and crimes of violence one sinks gradually to literary petty larceny. However,

there are coarsely effective poems in the volume, such as *A Super's Philosophy*, *Dick Hewlett*, a ballad of the Californian school, and *Gentleman Bill;* and there is one rather pretty poem called *The Return of Spring*:

> When robins hop on naked boughs,
> And swell their throats with song,
> When lab'rers trudge behind their ploughs,
> And blithely whistle their teams along;
>
> When glints of summer sunshine chase
> Park shadows on the distant hills,
> And scented tufts of pansies grace
> Moist grots that 'scape rude Borean chills.

The last line is very disappointing. No poet, nowadays, should write of 'rude Boreas'; he might just as well call the dawn 'Aurora,' or say that 'Flora decks the enamelled meads.' But there are some nice touches in the poem, and it is pleasant to find that tramps have their harmless moments. On the whole, the volume, if it is not quite worth reading, is at least worth looking at. The fool's motley in which it is arrayed is extremely curious and extremely characteristic.

Mr. Irwin's muse comes to us more simply clad, and more gracefully. She gains her colour-effect from the poet, not from the publisher. No cockneyism or colloquialism mars the sweetness of her speech. She finds music for every mood, and form for every feeling. In art as in life the law of heredity holds good. *On est toujours fils de quelqu'un.* And so it is easy to see that Mr. Irwin is a fervent admirer of Mr. Matthew Arnold. But

he is in no sense a plagiarist. He has succeeded in studying a fine poet without stealing from him —a very difficult thing to do—and though many of the reeds through which he blows have been touched by other lips, yet he is able to draw new music from them. Like most of our younger poets, Mr. Irwin is at his best in his sonnets, and those entitled *The Seeker after God* and *The Pillar of the Empire* are really remarkable. All through this volume, however, one comes across good work, and the descriptions of Indian scenery are excellent. India, in fact, is the picturesque background to these poems, and her monstrous beasts, strange flowers and fantastic birds are used with much subtlety for the production of artistic effect. Perhaps there is a little too much about the pipal-tree, but when we have a proper sense of Imperial unity, no doubt the pipal-tree will be as dear and as familiar to us as the oaks and elms of our own woodlands.

THE POETS' CORNER

II

A LITTLE schoolboy was once asked to explain the difference between prose and poetry. After some consideration he replied, ' "blue violets" is prose, and "violets blue" is poetry.' The distinction, we admit, is not exhaustive, but it seems to be the one that is extremely popular with our minor poets. Opening at random *The Queen's Innocent* we come across passages like this:

> Full gladly would I sit
> *Of such a potent magus at the feet,*

and this:

> The third, while yet a youth,
> Espoused a lady noble but not royal,
> *One only son who gave him*—Pharamond—

lines that, apparently, rest their claim to be regarded as poetry on their unnecessary and awkward inversions. Yet this poem is not without beauty, and the character of Nardi, the little

prince who is treated as the Court fool, shows a delicate grace of fancy, and is both tender and true. The most delightful thing in the whole volume is a little lyric called *April*, which is like a picture set to music.

The Chimneypiece of Bruges is a narrative poem in blank verse, and tells us of a young artist who, having been unjustly convicted of his wife's murder, spends his life in carving on the great chimneypiece of the prison the whole story of his love and suffering. The poem is full of colour, but the blank verse is somewhat heavy in movement. There are some pretty things in the book, and a poet without hysterics is rare.

Dr. Dawson Burns's *Oliver Cromwell* is a pleasant panegyric on the Protector, and reads like a prize poem by a nice sixth-form boy. The verses on *The Good Old Times* should be sent as a leaflet to all Tories of Mr. Chaplin's school, and the lines on Bunker's Hill, beginning,

> I stand on Bunker's towering pile,

are sure to be popular in America.

K. E. V.'s little volume is a series of poems on the Saints. Each poem is preceded by a brief biography of the Saint it celebrates—which is a very necessary precaution, as few of them ever existed. It does not display much poetic power, and such lines as these on St. Stephen,

> Did ever man before so fall asleep?
> A cruel shower of stones his only bed,
> For lullaby the curses loud and deep,
> His covering with blood red—

may be said to add another horror to martyrdom. Still it is a thoroughly well-intentioned book and eminently suitable for invalids.

Mr. Foskett's poems are very serious and deliberate. One of the best of them, *Harold Glynde*, is a Cantata for Total Abstainers, and has already been set to music. *A Hindoo Tragedy* is the story of an enthusiastic Brahmin reformer who tries to break down the prohibition against widows marrying, and there are other interesting tales. Mr. Foskett has apparently forgotten to insert the rhymes in his sonnet to Wordsworth; but, as he tells us elsewhere that 'Poesy is uninspired by Art,' perhaps he is only heralding a new and formless form. He is always sincere in his feelings, and his apostrophe to Canon Farrar is equalled only by his apostrophe to Shakespeare.

The Pilgrimage of Memory suffers a good deal by being printed as poetry, and Mr. Barker should republish it at once as a prose work. Take, for instance, this description of a lady on a runaway horse:—

> Her screams alarmed the Squire, who seeing the peril of his daughter, rode frantic after her. I saw at once the danger, and stepping from the footpath, show'd myself before the startled animal, which forthwith slackened pace, and darting up adroitly, I seized the rein, and in another moment, had released the maiden's foot, and held her, all insensible, within my arms. Poor girl, her head and face were sorely bruised, and I tried hard to staunch the blood which flowed from many a scalp-wound, and wipe away the dust that disfigured her lovely features. In another moment the Squire was by my side. 'Poor child,' he

cried, alarmed, 'is she dead?' 'No, sir; not dead, I think,' said I, 'but sorely bruised and injured.'

There is clearly nothing to be gained by dividing the sentences of this simple and straightforward narrative into lines of unequal length, and Mr. Barker's own arrangement of the metre,

> In another moment,
> The Squire was by my side.
> 'Poor child,' he cried, alarmed, 'is she dead?'
> 'No, sir; not dead, I think,' said I,
> 'But sorely bruised and injured,'

seems to us to be quite inferior to ours. We beg that the second edition of *The Pilgrimage of Memory* may be issued as a novel in prose.

Mr. Gladstone Turner believes that we are on the verge of a great social cataclysm, and warns us that our *cradles* are even now being rocked by *slumbering volcanoes!* We hope that there is no truth in this statement, and that it is merely a startling metaphor introduced for the sake of effect, for elsewhere in the volume there is a great deal of beauty which we should be sorry to think was doomed to immediate extinction. *The Choice*, for instance, is a charming poem, and the sonnet on *Evening* would be almost perfect if it were not for an unpleasant assonance in the fifth line. Indeed, so good is much of Mr. Gladstone Turner's work that we trust he will give up rhyming 'real' to 'steal' and 'feel,' as such bad habits are apt to grow on careless poets and to blunt their ear for music.

Nivalis is a five-act tragedy in blank verse. Most plays that are written to be read, not to be acted, miss that condensation and directness of expression which is one of the secrets of true dramatic diction, and Mr. Schwartz's tragedy is consequently somewhat verbose. Still, it is full of fine lines and noble scenes. It is essentially a work of art, and though, as far as language is concerned, the personages all speak through the lips of the poet, yet in passion and purpose their characters are clearly differentiated, and the Queen Nivalis and her lover Giulio are drawn with real psychological power. We hope that some day Mr. Schwartz will write a play for the stage, as he has the dramatic instinct and the dramatic imagination, and can make life pass into literature without robbing it of its reality.

One of the most pleasing volumes that has appeared as yet in the Canterbury Series is the collection of Allan Ramsay's poems. Ramsay, whose profession was the making of periwigs, and whose pleasure was the making of poetry, is always delightful reading, except when he tries to write English and to imitate Pope. His *Gentle Shepherd* is a charming pastoral play, full of humour and romance; his *Vision* has a good deal of natural fire; and some of his songs, such as *The Yellow-hair'd Laddie* and *The Lass of Patie's Mill*, might rank beside those of Burns. The preface to this attractive little edition is from the pen of Mr. J. Logie Robertson, and the simple, straightforward style in which it is written contrasts favour-

ably with the silly pompous manner affected by so many of the other editors of the series.

Ramsay's life is worth telling well, and Mr. Robertson tells it well, and gives us a really capital picture of Edinburgh society in the early half of the last century.

Dante for Beginners, by Miss Arabella Shore, is a sort of literary guide-book. What Virgil was to the great Florentine, Miss Shore would be to the British public, and her modest little volume can do no possible harm to Dante, which is more than one can say of many commentaries on the *Divine Comedy*.

THE POETS' CORNER

III

SUCH a pseudonym for a poet as 'Glenessa' reminds us of the good old days of the Della Cruscans, but it would not be fair to attribute Glenessa's poetry to any known school of literature, either past or present. Whatever qualities it possesses are entirely its own. Glenessa's most ambitious work, and the one that gives the title to his book, is a poetic drama about the Garden of Eden. The subject is undoubtedly interesting, but the execution can hardly be said to be quite worthy of it. Devils, on account of their inherent wickedness, may be excused for singing—

> Then we'll rally—rally—rally—
> Yes, we'll rally—rally O!—

but such scenes as—

> *Enter* ADAM.
>
> ADAM (*excitedly*). Eve, where art thou?
> EVE (*surprised*). Oh!
> ADAM (*in astonishment*). Eve! my God, she's there
> Beside that fatal tree;

or

Enter ADAM *and* EVE.

EVE (*in astonishment*). Well, is not this surprising?
ADAM (*distracted*). It is—

seem to belong rather to the sphere of comedy than to that of serious verse. Poor Glenessa! the gods have not made him poetical, and we hope he will abandon his wooing of the muse. He is fitted, not for better, but for other things.

Vortigern and Rowena is a cantata about the Britons and the Danes. There is a Druid priestess who sings of Cynthia and Endymion, and a chorus of jubilant Vikings. It is charmingly printed, and as a libretto for music quite above the average.

As truly religious people are resigned to everything, even to mediocre poetry, there is no reason at all why Madame Guyon's verses should not be popular with a large section of the community. Their editor, Mr. Dyer, has reprinted the translations Cowper made for Mr. Bull, added some versions of his own and written a pleasing preface about this gentle seventeenth-century saint whose life was her best, indeed her only true poem.

Mr. Pierce has discovered a tenth muse and writes impassioned verses to the Goddess of Chess whom he apostrophises as 'Sublime Caissa!' Zuketort and Steinitz are his heroes, and he is as melodious on mates as he is graceful on gambits. We are glad to say, however, that he has other subjects, and one of his poems beginning:

> Cedar boxes deeply cut,
> China bowls of quaint device,
> Heap'd with rosy leaves and spice,
> Violets in old volumes shut—

is very dainty and musical.

Mr. Clifford Harrison is well known as the most poetic of our reciters, but as a writer himself of poetry he is not so famous. Yet his little volume *In Hours of Leisure* contains some charming pieces, and many of the short fourteen-line poems are really pretty, though they are very defective in form. Indeed, of form Mr. Harrison is curiously careless. Such rhymes as 'calm' and 'charm,' 'baize' and 'place,' '*jeu*' and 'knew,' are quite dreadful, while 'operas' and 'stars,' 'Gaútama' and 'afar' are too bad even for Steinway Hall. Those who have Keats's genius may borrow Keats's cockneyisms, but from minor poets we have a right to expect some regard to the ordinary technique of verse. However, if Mr. Harrison has not always form, at least he has always feeling. He has a wonderful command over all the egotistic emotions, is quite conscious of the artistic value of remorse, and displays a sincere sympathy with his own moments of sadness, playing upon his moods as a young lady plays upon the piano. Now and then we come across some delicate descriptive touches, such as

> The cuckoo knew its latest day had come,
> And told its name once more to all the hills,

and whenever Mr. Harrison writes about nature he is certainly pleasing and picturesque but, as a

rule, he is over-anxious about himself and forgets that the personal expression of joy or sorrow is not poetry, though it may afford excellent material for a sentimental diary.

The daily increasing class of readers that likes unintelligible poetry should study *Æonial*. It is in many ways a really remarkable production. Very fantastic, very daring, crowded with strange metaphor and clouded by monstrous imagery, it has a sort of turbid splendour about it, and should the author some day add meaning to his music he may give us a true work of art. At present he hardly realises that an artist should be articulate.

Seymour's Inheritance is a short novel in blank verse. On the whole, it is very harmless both in manner and matter, but we must protest against such lines as

> And in the windows of his heart the blinds
> Of happiness had been drawn down by Grief,

for a simile committing suicide is always a depressing spectacle. Some of the other poems are so simple and modest that we hope Mr. Ross will not carry out his threat of issuing a 'more pretentious volume.' Pretentious volumes of poetry are very common and very worthless.

Mr. Brodie's *Lyrics of the Sea* are spirited and manly, and show a certain freedom of rhythmical movement, pleasant in days of wooden verse. He is at his best, however, in his sonnets. Their architecture is not always of the finest order but,

here and there, one meets with lines that are graceful and felicitous.

> Like silver swallows on a summer morn
> Cutting the air with momentary wings,

is pretty, and on flowers Mr. Brodie writes quite charmingly. The only thoroughly bad piece in the book is *The Workman's Song*. Nothing can be said in favour of

> Is there a bit of blue, boys?
> Is there a bit of blue?
> In heaven's leaden hue, boys?
> 'Tis hope's eye peeping through . . .

for optimism of this kind is far more dispiriting than Schopenhauer or Hartmann at their worst, nor are there really any grounds for supposing that the British workman enjoys third-rate poetry.

THE POETS' CORNER

IV

A CYNICAL critic once remarked that no great poet is intelligible and no little poet worth understanding, but that otherwise poetry is an admirable thing. This, however, seems to us a somewhat harsh view of the subject. Little poets are an extremely interesting study. The best of them have often some new beauty to show us, and though the worst of them may bore yet they rarely brutalise. *Poor Folks' Lives*, for instance, by the Rev. Frederick Langbridge, is a volume that could do no possible harm to any one. These poems display a healthy, rollicking, G. R. Sims tone of feeling, an almost unbounded regard for the converted drunkard, and a strong sympathy with the sufferings of the poor. As for their theology, it is of that honest, downright and popular kind, which in these rationalistic days is probably quite as useful as any other form of theological thought. Here is the open-

ing of a poem called *A Street Sermon*, which is an interesting example of what muscular Christianity can do in the sphere of verse-making:

> What, God fight shy of the city?
> He's t'other side up I guess;
> If you ever want to find Him,
> Whitechapel's the right address.

Those who prefer pseudo-poetical prose to really prosaic poetry will wish that Mr. Dalziel had converted most of his *Pictures in the Fire* into leaders for the *Daily Telegraph*, as, from the literary point of view, they have all the qualities dear to the Asiatic school. What a splendid leader the young lions of Fleet Street would have made out of *The Prestige of England*, for instance, a poem suggested by the opening of the Zulu war in 1879.

> Now away sail our ships far away o'er the sea,
> Far away with our gallant and brave;
> The loud war-cry is sounding like wild revelriè,
> And our heroes dash on to their grave;
> For the fierce Zulu tribes have arisen in their might,
> And in thousands swept down on our few;
> But these braves only yielded when crushed in the fight,
> Man to man to their colours were true.

The conception of the war-cry sounding 'like wild revelriè' is quite in the true Asiatic spirit, and indeed the whole poem is full of the daring English of a special correspondent. Personally, we prefer Mr. Dalziel when he is not quite so military. *The Fairies*, for instance, is a very pretty poem, and reminds us of some of Dicky Doyle's charming drawings, and *Nat Bentley* is a

capital ballad in its way. The Irish poems, however, are rather vulgar and should be expunged. The Celtic element in literature is extremely valuable, but there is absolutely no excuse for shrieking 'Shillelagh!' and 'O Gorrah!'

Women must Weep, by Professor Harald Williams, has the most dreadful cover of any book that we have come across for some time past. It is possibly intended to symbolise the sorrow of the world, but it merely suggests the decorative tendencies of an undertaker and is as depressing as it is detestable. However, as the cowl does not make the monk, so the binding, in the case of the Savile Club school, does not make the poet, and we open the volume without prejudice. The first poem that we come to is a vigorous attack on those wicked and misguided people who believe that Beauty is its own reason for existing, and that Art should have no other aim but her own perfection. Here are some of the Professor's gravest accusations:

> Why do they patch, in their fatal choice,
> When at secrets such the angels quake,
> But a play of the Vision and the Voice?—
> Oh, it's all for Art's sake.
>
> Why do they gather what should be left,
> And leave behind what they ought to take,
> And exult in the basest blank or theft?—
> Oh, it's all for Art's sake.

It certainly must be admitted that to 'patch' or to 'exult in the basest blank' is a form of conduct

quite unbefitting an artist, the very obscurity and incomprehensible character of such a crime adding something to its horror. However, while fully recognising the wickedness of 'patching' we cannot but think that Professor Harald Williams is happier in his criticism of life than he is in his art criticism. His poem *Between the Banks*, for instance, has a touch of sincerity and fine feeling that almost atones for its over-emphasis.

Mr. Buchan's blank verse drama *Joseph and His Brethren* bears no resemblance to that strange play on the same subject which Mr. Swinburne so much admires. Indeed, it may be said to possess all the fatal originality of inexperience. However, Mr. Buchan does not leave us in any doubt about his particular method of writing. 'As to the dialogue,' he says, 'I have put the language of real life into the mouths of the speakers, except when they may be supposed to be under strong emotion; then their utterances become more rapid—broken—figurative—in short more poetical.' Well, here is the speech of Potiphar's wife under strong emotion:

> ZULEEKHA (*seizing him*). Love me! or death!
> Ha! dost thou think thou wilt not, and yet live?
> By Isis, no. And thou wilt turn away,
> Iron, marble mockman! Ah! I hold thy life!
> Love feeds on death. It swallows up all life,
> Hugging, or killing. I to woo, and thou—
> Unhappy me! Oh!

The language here is certainly rapid and broken, and the expression 'marble mockman' is, we sup-

pose, figurative, but the passage can scarcely be described as poetical, though it fulfils all Mr. Buchan's conditions. Still, tedious as Zuleekha and Joseph are, the Chorus of Ancients is much worse. These 'ideal spectators' seem to spend their lives in uttering those solemn platitudes that with the aged pass for wisdom. The chief offenders are the members of what Mr. Buchan calls 'The 2nd.—Semi-chorus,' who have absolutely no hesitation in interrupting the progress of the play with observations of this kind:

> 2ND.—SEMI-CHORUS
> Ah! but favour extreme shown to one
> Among equals who yet stand apart,
> Awakeneth, say ye, if naturally,
> The demons—jealousy, envy, hate,—
> In the breast of those passed by.

It is a curious thing that when minor poets write choruses to a play they should always consider it necessary to adopt the style and language of a bad translator. We fear that Mr. Bohn has much to answer for.

God's Garden is a well-meaning attempt to use Nature for theological and educational purposes. It belongs to that antiquated school of thought that, in spite of the discoveries of modern science, invites the sluggard to look at the ant, and the idle to imitate the bee. It is full of false analogies and dull eighteenth-century didactics. It tells us that the flowering cactus should remind us that a dwarf may possess mental and moral qualities, that the mountain ash should teach us

the precious fruits of affliction, and that a fond father should learn from the example of the chestnut that the most beautiful children often turn out badly! We must admit that we have no sympathy with this point of view, and we strongly protest against the idea that

> The flaming poppy, with its black core, tells
> Of anger's flushing face, and heart of sin.

The worst use that man can make of Nature is to turn her into a mirror for his own vices, nor are Nature's secrets ever disclosed to those who approach her in this spirit. However, the author of this irritating little volume is not always botanising and moralising in this reckless and improper fashion. He has better moments, and those who sympathise with the Duke of Westminster's efforts to provide open spaces for the people, will no doubt join in the aspiration—

> God bless wise Grosvenors whose hearts incline,
> Workmen to fête, and grateful souls refine:

though they may regret that so noble a sentiment is expressed in so inadequate a form.

It is difficult to understand why Mr. Cyrus Thornton should have called his volume *Voices of the Street*. However, poets have a perfect right to christen their own children, and if the wine is good no one should quarrel with the bush. Mr. Thornton's verse is often graceful and melodious, and some of his lines, such as—

> And the wise old Roman bondsman saw no terror in the dead—
> Children when the play was over, going softly home to bed,

have a pleasant Tennysonian ring. The *Ballad of the Old Year* is rather depressing. 'Bury the Old Year Solemnly' has been said far too often, and the sentiment is suitable only for Christmas crackers. The best thing in the book is *The Poet's Vision of Death*, which is quite above the average.

Mrs. Dobell informs us that she has already published sixteen volumes of poetry and that she intends to publish two more. The volume that now lies before us is entitled *In the Watches of the Night*, most of the poems that it contains having been composed 'in the neighbourhood of the sea, between the hours of ten and two o'clock.' Judging from the following extract we cannot say that we consider this a very favourable time for inspiration, at any rate in the case of Mrs. Dobell:

> Were Anthony Trollope and George Eliot
> Alive—which unfortunately they are not—
> As regards the subject of 'quack-snubbing,' you know,
> To support me I am sure they hadn't been slow—
> For they, too, hated the wretched parasite
> That fattens on the freshest, the most bright
> Of the blossoms springing from the—Public Press!—
> And that oft are flowers that even our quacks should bless!

A Song of Jubilee and Other Poems contains some pretty, picturesque verses. Its author is Mrs. De Courcy Laffan, who, under the name of Mrs. Leith Adams, is well known as a novelist and story writer. The Jubilee Ode is quite as good as most of the Jubilee Odes have been, and

some of the short poems are graceful. This from *The First Butterfly* is pretty:

> O little bird without a song! I love
> Thy silent presence, floating in the light—
> A living, perfect thing, when scarcely yet
> The snow-white blossom crawls along the wall,
> And not a daisy shows its star-like head
> Amid the grass.

I hope that some of my readers will be interested in Miss Beatrice Crane's little poem, *Blush-Roses*, for which her father, Mr. Walter Crane, has done so lovely and graceful a design. Mrs. Simon, of Birkdale Park, Southport, tells me that she offered a prize last term at her school for the best sonnet on any work of art. The poems were sent to Professor Dowden, who awarded the prize to the youthful authoress of the following sonnet on Mr. Watts's picture of *Hope:*

> She sits with drooping form and fair bent head,
> Low-bent to hear the faintly-sounding strain
> That thrills her with the sweet uncertain pain
> Of timid trust and restful tears unshed.
> Around she feels vast spaces. Awe and dread
> Encompass her. And the dark doubt she fain
> Would banish, sees the shuddering fear remain,
> And ever presses near with stealthy tread.
>
> But not for ever will the misty space
> Close down upon her meekly-patient eyes.
> The steady light within them soon will ope
> Their heavy lids, and then the sweet fair face,
> Uplifted in a sudden glad surprise,
> Will find the bright reward which comes to Hope.

I myself am rather inclined to prefer this sonnet on Mr. Watts's *Psyche*. The sixth line is deficient: but, in spite of the faulty *technique*, there is a great deal that is suggestive in it:

> Unfathomable boundless mystery,
> Last work of the Creator, deathless, vast,
> Soul—essence moulded of a changeful past;
> Thou art the offspring of Eternity:
> Breath of his breath, by his vitality
> Engendered, in his image cast.
> Part of the Nature-song whereof the last
> Chord soundeth never in the harmony.
> 'Psyche'! Thy form is shadowed o'er with pain
> Born of intensest longing, and the rain
> Of a world's weeping lieth like a sea
> Of silent soundless sorrow in thine eyes.
> Yet grief is not eternal, for clouds rise
> From out the ocean everlastingly.

THE POETS' CORNER

V

MR. HEYWOOD'S *Salome* seems to have thrilled the critics of the United States. From a collection of press notices prefixed to the volume we learn that *Putnam's Magazine* has found in it 'the simplicity and grace of naked Grecian statues,' and that Dr. Jos. G. Cogswell, LL.D., has declared that it will live to be appreciated 'as long as the English language endures.' Remembering that prophecy is the most gratuitous form of error, we will not attempt to argue with Dr. Jos. G. Cogswell, LL.D., but will content ourselves with protesting against such a detestable expression as 'naked Grecian statues.' If this be the literary style of the future the English language will not endure very long. As for the poem itself, the best that one can say of it is that it is a triumph of conscientious industry. From an artistic point of view it is a

very commonplace production indeed, and we must protest against such blank verse as the following:

> From the hour I saw her first, I was entranced,
> Or embosomed in a charmed world, circumscribed
> By its proper circumambient atmosphere,
> Herself its centre, and wide pervading spirit.
> The air all beauty of colour held dissolved,
> And tints distilled as dew are shed by heaven.

Mr. Griffiths' *Sonnets and Other Poems* are very simple, which is a good thing, and very sentimental, which is a thing not quite so good. As a general rule, his verse is full of pretty echoes of other writers, but in one sonnet he makes a distinct attempt to be original and the result is extremely depressing.

> Earth wears her grandest robe, by autumn spun,
> *Like some stout mariner who of youth has run*
> *The course*, . . .

is the most dreadful simile we have ever come across even in poetry. Mr. Griffiths should beware of originality. Like beauty, it is a fatal gift.

Imitators of Mr. Browning are, unfortunately, common enough, but imitators of Mr. and Mrs. Browning combined are so very rare that we have read Mr. Francis Prevost's *Fires of Green Wood* with great interest. Here is a curious reproduction of the manner of *Aurora Leigh:*

But Spring! that part at least our unchaste eyes
Infer from some wind-blown philactery,
(It wears its breast bare also)—chestnut buds,
Pack'd in white wool as though sent here from heaven,
Stretching wild stems to reach each climbing lark
That shouts against the fading stars.

And here is a copy of Mr. Browning's mannerisms. We do not like it quite so well:

If another
Save all bother,
Hold that perhaps loaves grow like parsnips:
Call the baker
Heaven's care-taker,
Live, die; Death may show him where the farce nips.
Not I; truly
He may duly
Into church or church-day shunt God;
Chink his pocket,
Win your locket;—
Down we go together to confront God.

Yet, in spite of these ingenious caricatures there are some good poems, or perhaps we should say some good passages, in Mr. Prevost's volume. *The Whitening of the Thorn-tree*, for instance, opens admirably, and is, in some respects, a rather remarkable story. We have no doubt that some day Mr. Prevost will be able to study the great masters without stealing from them.

Mr. John Cameron Grant has christened himself 'England's Empire Poet,' and, lest we should have any doubts upon the subject, tells us that he 'dare not lie,' a statement which in a poet seems to show a great want of courage. Pro-

tection and Paper-Unionism are the gods of Mr. Grant's idolatry, and his verse is full of such fine fallacies and masterly misrepresentations that he should be made Laureate to the Primrose League at once. Such a stanza as—

> Ask the ruined Sugar-worker if he loves the foreign beet—
> Rather, one can hear him answer, would I see my children eat—

would thrill any Tory tea-party in the provinces, and it would be difficult for the advocates of Coercion to find a more appropriate or a more characteristic peroration for a stump speech than

> We have not to do with justice, right depends on point of view,
> The one question for our thought is, what's our neighbour going to do.

The hymn to the Union Jack, also, would make a capital leaflet for distribution in boroughs where the science of heraldry is absolutely unknown, and the sonnet on Mr. Gladstone is sure to be popular with all who admire violence and vulgarity in literature. It is quite worthy of Thersites at his best.

Mr. Evans's *Cæsar Borgia* is a very tedious tragedy. Some of the passages are in the true 'Ercles' vein,' like the following:

> CÆSAR (*starting up*).
> Help, Michelotto, help! Begone! Begone!
> Fiends! torments! devils! Gandia! What, Gandia?
> O turn those staring eyes away. See! See
> He bleeds to death! O fly! Who are those fiends
> That tug me by the throat? O! O! O! O! (*Pauses.*)

But, as a rule, the style is of a more commonplace character. The other poems in the volume are comparatively harmless, though it is sad to find Shakespeare's 'Bacchus with pink eyne' reappearing as 'pinky-eyed Silenus.'

The Cross and the Grail is a collection of poems on the subject of temperance. Compared to real poetry these verses are as 'water unto wine,' but no doubt this was the effect intended. The illustrations are quite dreadful, especially one of an angel appearing to a young man from Chicago who seems to be drinking brown sherry.

Juvenal in Piccadilly and *The Excellent Mystery* are two fierce social satires and, like most satires, they are the product of the corruption they pillory. The first is written on a very convenient principle. Blank spaces are left for the names of the victims and these the reader can fill up as he wishes.

> Must —— bluster, —— give the lie,
> —— wear the night out, —— sneer!

is an example of this anonymous method. It does not seem to us very effective. *The Excellent Mystery* is much better. It is full of clever epigrammatic lines, and its wit fully atones for its bitterness. It is hardly a poem to quote but it is certainly a poem to read.

The Chronicle of Mites is a mock-heroic poem about the inhabitants of a decaying cheese who speculate about the origin of their species and hold learned discussions upon the meaning of

evolution and the Gospel according to Darwin. This cheese-epic is a rather unsavoury production and the style is at times so monstrous and so realistic that the author should be called the Gorgon-Zola of literature.

Wordsworth, in one of his interesting letters to Lady Beaumont, says that it is 'an awful truth that there neither is nor can be any genuine enjoyment of poetry among nineteen out of twenty of those persons who live or wish to live in the broad light of the world—among those who either are, or are striving to make themselves, people of consideration in society,' adding that the mission of poetry is 'to console the afflicted; to add sunshine to daylight by making the happy happier; to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think, and feel, and, therefore, to become more actively and securely virtuous.' I am, however, rather disposed to think that the age in which we live is one that has a very genuine enjoyment of poetry, though we may no longer agree with Wordsworth's ideas on the subject of the poet's proper mission; and it is interesting to note that this enjoyment manifests itself by creation even more than by criticism. To realise the popularity of the great poets, one should turn to the minor poets and see whom they follow, what master they select, whose music they echo. At present, there seems to be a reaction in favour of Lord Tennyson, if we are to judge by *Rachel and Other Poems*, which is a rather remarkable little volume in its way.

The poem that gives its title to the book is full of strong lines and good images; and, in spite of its Tennysonian echoes, there is something attractive in such verses as the following:

Day by day along the Orient faintly glows the tender dawn;
Day by day the pearly dewdrops tremble on the upland lawn:

Day by day the star of morning pales before the coming ray,
And the first faint streak of radiance brightens to the perfect day.

Day by day the rosebud gathers to itself, from earth and sky,
Fragrant stores and ampler beauty, lovelier form and deeper dye:

Day by day a richer crimson mantles in its glowing breast—
Every golden hour conferring some sweet grace that crowns the rest.

And thou canst not tell the moment when the day ascends her throne,
When the morning star hath vanished, and the rose is fully blown.

So each day fulfils its purpose, calm, unresting, strong, and sure,
Moving onward to completion, doth the work of God endure.

How unlike man's toil and hurry! how unlike the noise, the strife,
All the pain of incompleteness, all the weariness of life!

Ye look upward and take courage. He who leads the
golden hours,
Feeds the birds, and clothes the lily, made these human
hearts of ours:

Knows their need, and will supply it, manna falling day by
day,
Bread from heaven, and food of angels, all along the desert
way.

THE POETS' CORNER

VI

DAVID WESTREN, by Mr. Alfred Hayes, is a long narrative poem in Tennysonian blank verse, a sort of serious novel set to music. It is somewhat lacking in actuality, and the picturesque style in which it is written rather contributes to this effect, lending the story beauty but robbing it of truth. Still, it is not without power, and cultured verse is certainly a pleasanter medium for story-telling than coarse and common prose. The hero of the poem is a young clergyman of the muscular Christian school:

> A lover of good cheer; a bubbling source
> Of jest and tale; a monarch of the gun;
> A dreader tyrant of the darting trout
> Than that bright bird whose azure lightning threads
> The brooklet's bowery windings; the red fox
> Did well to seek the boulder-strewn hill-side,
> When Westren cheered her dappled foes; the otter
> Had cause to rue the dawn when Westren's form
> Loomed through the streaming bracken, to waylay
> Her late return from plunder, the rough pack
> Barking a jealous welcome round their friend.

One day he meets on the river a lovely girl who is angling, and helps her to land

> A gallant fish, all flashing in the sun
> In silver mail inlaid with scarlet gems,
> His back thick-sprinkled as a leopard's hide
> With rich brown spots, and belly of bright gold.

They naturally fall in love with each other and marry, and for many years David Westren leads a perfectly happy life. Suddenly calamity comes upon him, his wife and children die and he finds himself alone and desolate. Then begins his struggle. Like Job, he cries out against the injustice of things, and his own personal sorrow makes him realise the sorrow and misery of the world. But the answer that satisfied Job does not satisfy him. He finds no comfort in contemplating Leviathan:

> As if we lacked reminding of brute force,
> As if we never felt the clumsy hoof,
> As if the bulk of twenty million whales
> Were worth one pleading soul, or all the laws
> That rule the lifeless suns could soothe the sense
> Of outrage in a loving human heart!
> Sublime? majestic? Ay, but when our trust
> Totters, and faith is shattered to the base,
> Grand words will not uprear it.

Mr. Hayes states the problem of life extremely well, but his solution is sadly inadequate both from a psychological and from a dramatic point of view. David Westren ultimately becomes a

mild Unitarian, a sort of pastoral Stopford Brooke with leanings towards Positivism, and we leave him preaching platitudes to a village congregation. However, in spite of this commonplace conclusion there is a great deal in Mr. Hayes's poem that is strong and fine, and he undoubtedly possesses a fair ear for music and a remarkable faculty of poetical expression. Some of his descriptive touches of nature, such as

> In meeting woods, whereon a film of mist
> Slept like the bloom upon the purple grape,

are very graceful and suggestive, and he will probably make his mark in literature.

There is much that is fascinating in Mr. Rennell Rodd's last volume, *The Unknown Madonna and Other Poems*. Mr. Rodd looks at life with all the charming optimism of a young man, though he is quite conscious of the fact that a stray note of melancholy, here and there, has an artistic as well as a popular value; he has a keen sense of the pleasurableness of colour, and his verse is distinguished by a certain refinement and purity of outline; though not passionate he can play very prettily with the words of passion, and his emotions are quite healthy and quite harmless. *In Excelsis*, the most ambitious poem in the book, is somewhat too abstract and metaphysical, and such lines as

> Lift thee o'er thy 'here' and 'now,'
> Look beyond thine 'I' and 'thou,'

are excessively tedious. But when Mr. Rodd leaves the problem of the Unconditioned to take care of itself, and makes no attempt to solve the mysteries of the Ego and the non-Ego, he is very pleasant reading indeed. *A Mazurka of Chopin* is charming, in spite of the awkwardness of the fifth line, and so are the verses on Assisi, and those on San Servolo at Venice. These last have all the brilliancy of a clever pastel. The prettiest thing in the whole volume is this little lyric on Spring:

> Such blue of sky, so palely fair,
> Such glow of earth, such lucid air!
> Such purple on the mountain lines,
> Such deep new verdure in the pines!
> The live light strikes the broken towers,
> The crocus bulbs burst into flowers,
> The sap strikes up the black vine stock,
> And the lizard wakes in the splintered rock,
> And the wheat's young green peeps through the sod,
> And the heart is touched with a thought of God;
> The very silence seems to sing,
> It must be Spring, it must be Spring!

We do not care for 'palely fair' in the first line, and the repetition of the word 'strikes' is not very felicitous, but the grace of movement and delicacy of touch are pleasing.

The Wind, by Mr. James Ross, is a rather gusty ode, written apparently without any definite scheme of metre, and not very impressive as it lacks both the strength of the blizzard and the sweetness of Zephyr. Here is the opening:

The roaming, tentless wind
No rest can ever find—
From east, and west, and south, and north
He is for ever driven forth!
From the chill east
Where fierce hyænas seek their awful feast:
From the warm west,
By beams of glitt'ring summer blest.

Nothing could be much worse than this, and if the line 'Where fierce hyænas seek their awful feast' is intended to frighten us, it entirely misses its effect. The ode is followed by some sonnets which are destined, we fear, to be *ludibria ventis*. Immortality, even in the nineteenth century, is not granted to those who rhyme 'awe' and 'war' together.

Mr. Isaac Sharp's *Saul of Tarsus* is an interesting, and, in some respects, a fine poem.

Saul of Tarsus, silently,
With a silent company,
To Damascus' gates drew nigh.

. . . .

And his eyes, too, and his mien
Were, as are the eagles, keen;
All the man was aquiline—

are two strong, simple verses, and indeed the spirit of the whole poem is dignified and stately. The rest of the volume, however, is disappointing. Ordinary theology has long since converted its gold into lead, and words and phrases that once touched the heart of the world have become wearisome and meaningless through repe-

tition. If Theology desires to move us, she must re-write her formulas.

There is something very pleasant in coming across a poet who can apostrophise Byron as

> transcendent star
> That gems the firmament of poesy,

and can speak of Longfellow as a 'mighty Titan.' Reckless panegyrics of this kind show a kindly nature and a good heart, and Mr. Mackenzie's *Highland Daydreams* could not possibly offend any one. It must be admitted that they are rather old-fashioned, but this is usually the case with natural spontaneous verse. It takes a great artist to be thoroughly modern. Nature is always a little behind the age.

The Story of the Cross, an attempt to versify the Gospel narratives, is a strange survival of the Tate and Brady school of poetry. Mr. Nash, who styles himself 'a humble soldier in the army of Faith,' expresses a hope that his book may 'invigorate devotional feeling, especially among the young, to whom verse is perhaps more attractive than to their elders,' but we should be sorry to think that people of any age could admire such a paraphrase as the following:

> Foxes have holes, in which to slink for rest,
> The birds of air find shelter in the nest;
> But He, the Son of Man and Lord of all,
> Has no abiding place His own to call.

It is a curious fact that the worst work is always done with the best intentions, and that people

are never so trivial as when they take themselves very seriously.

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VII

MR. IAN HAMILTON'S *Ballad of Hádji* is undeniably clever. Hádji is a wonderful Arab horse that a reckless hunter rides to death in the pursuit of a wild boar, and the moral of the poem—for there is a moral—seems to be that an absorbing passion is a very dangerous thing and blunts the human sympathies. In the course of the chase a little child is drowned, a Brahmin maiden murdered, and an aged peasant severely wounded, but the hunter cares for none of these things and will not hear of stopping to render any assistance. Some of the stanzas are very graceful, notably one beginning

> Yes—like a bubble filled with smoke—
> The curd-white moon upswimming broke
> The vacancy of space;

but such lines as the following, which occur in the description of the fight with the boar—

I hung as close as keepsake locket
On maiden breast—but from its socket
He wrenched my bridle arm,

are dreadful, and 'his brains festooned the thorn' is not a very happy way of telling the reader how the boar died. All through the volume we find the same curious mixture of good and bad. To say that the sun kisses the earth 'with flame-moustachoed lip' is awkward and uncouth, and yet the poem in which the expression occurs has some pretty lines. Mr. Ian Hamilton should prune. Pruning, whether in the garden or in the study, is a most healthy and useful employment. The volume is nicely printed, but Mr. Strang's frontispiece is not a great success, and most of the tail-pieces seem to have been designed without any reference to the size of the page.

Mr. Catty dedicates his book to the memory of Wordsworth, Shelley, Coleridge and Keats—a somewhat pompous signboard for such very ordinary wine—and an inscription in golden letters on the cover informs us that his poems are 'addressed to the rising generation,' whom, he tells us elsewhere, he is anxious to initiate into the great comprehensive truth that 'Virtue is no other than self-interest, deeply understood.' In order to further this laudable aim he has written a very tedious blank verse poem which he calls *The Secret of Content*, but it certainly does not convey that secret to the reader. It is heavy, abstract and prosaic, and shows how intolerably dull a man can be who has the best intentions and the

most earnest beliefs. In the rest of the volume, where Mr. Catty does not take himself quite so seriously, there are some rather pleasing things. The sonnet on Shelley's room at University College would be admirable but for the unmusical character of the last line.

> Green in the wizard arms
> Of the foam-bearded Atlantic,
> An isle of old enchantment,
> A melancholy isle,
> Enchanted and dreaming lies;
> And there, by Shannon's flowing
> In the moonlight, spectre-thin,
> The spectre Erin sits.
>
> Wail no more, lonely one, mother of exile wail no more,
> Banshee of the world—no more!
> Thy sorrows are the world's, thou art no more alone;
> Thy wrongs the world's—

are the first and last stanzas of Mr. Todhunter's poem *The Banshee*. To throw away the natural grace of rhyme from a modern song is, as Mr. Swinburne once remarked, a wilful abdication of half the power and half the charm of verse, and we cannot say that Mr. Todhunter has given us much that consoles us for its loss. Part of his poem reads like a translation of an old Bardic song, part of it like rough material for poetry, and part of it like misshapen prose. It is an interesting specimen of poetic writing but it is not a perfect work of art. It is amorphous and inchoate, and the same must be said of the two other poems, *The Doom of the Children of Lir*, and

The Lamentation for the Sons of Turann. Rhyme gives architecture as well as melody to song, and though the lovely lute-builded walls of Thebes may have risen up to unrhymed choral metres, we have had no modern Amphion to work such wonders for us. Such a verse as—

> Five were the chiefs who challenged
> By their deeds the Over-kingship,
> Bov Derg, the Daghda's son, Ilbrac of Assaroe,
> And Lir of the White Field in the plain of Emain
> Macha;
> And after them stood up Midhir the proud, who
> reigned
> Upon the hills of Bri,
> Of Bri the loved of Liath, Bri of the broken heart;
> And last was Angus Og; all these had many voices,
> But for Bov Derg were most,

has, of course, an archæological interest, but has no artistic value at all. Indeed, from the point of view of art, the few little poems at the end of the volume are worth all the ambitious pseudo-epics that Mr. Todhunter has tried to construct out of Celtic lore. *A Bacchic Day* is charming, and the sonnet on the open-air performance of *The Faithfull Shepherdesse* is most gracefully phrased and most happy in conception.

Mr. Peacock is an American poet, and Professor Thomas Danleigh Supplée, A.M., Ph.D, F.R.S., who has written a preface to his *Poems of the Plains and Songs of the Solitudes*, tells us that he is entitled to be called the Laureate of the West. Though a staunch Republican, Mr. Peacock, according to the enthusiastic Professor, is

not ashamed of his ancestor King William of Holland, nor of his relatives Lord and Lady Peacock who, it seems, are natives of Scotland. He was brought up at Zanesville, Muskingum Co., Ohio, where his father edited the Zanesville *Aurora*, and he had an uncle who was 'a superior man' and edited the Wheeling *Intelligencer*. His poems seem to be extremely popular, and have been highly praised, the Professor informs us, by Victor Hugo, the *Saturday Review* and the *Commercial Advertiser*. The preface is the most amusing part of the book, but the poems also are worth studying. *The Maniac*, *The Bandit Chief*, and *The Outlaw* can hardly be called light reading, but we strongly recommend the poem on Chicago:

> Chicago! great city of the West!
> All that wealth, all that power invest;
> Thou sprang like magic from the sand,
> As touched by the magician's wand.

'Thou sprang' is slightly depressing, and the second line is rather obscure, but we should not measure by too high a standard the untutored utterances of artless nature. The opening lines of *The Vendetta* also deserve mention:

> When stars are glowing through day's gloaming glow,
> Reflecting from ocean's deep, mighty flow,
> At twilight, when no grim shadows of night,
> Like ghouls, have stalked in wake of the light

The first line is certainly a masterpiece, and, indeed, the whole volume is full of gems of this kind. The Professor remarks in his elaborate preface

that Mr. Peacock 'frequently rises to the sublime,' and the two passages quoted above show how keenly critical is his taste in these matters and how well the poet deserves his panegyric.

Mr. Alexander Skene Smith's *Holiday Recreations and Other Poems* is heralded by a preface for which Principal Cairns is responsible. Principal Cairns claims that the life-story enshrined in Mr. Smith's poems shows the wide diffusion of native fire and literary culture in all parts of Scotland, 'happily under higher auspices than those of mere poetic impulse.' This is hardly a very felicitous way of introducing a poet, nor can we say that Mr. Smith's poems are distinguished by either fire or culture. He has a placid, pleasant way of writing, and, indeed, his verses cannot do any harm, though he really should not publish such attempts at metrical versions of the Psalms as the following:

> A septuagenarian
> We frequently may see;
> An octogenarian
> If one should live to be,
> He is a burden to himself
> With weariness and woe
> And soon he dies, and off he flies,
> And leaveth all below.

The 'literary culture' that produced these lines is, we fear, not of a very high order.

'I study Poetry simply as a fine art by which I may exercise my intellect and elevate my taste,' wrote the late Mr. George Morine many years

ago to a friend, and the little posthumous volume that now lies before us contains the record of his quiet literary life. One of the sonnets, that entitled *Sunset*, appeared in Mr. Waddington's anthology, about ten years after Mr. Morine's death, but this is the first time that his collected poems have been published. They are often distinguished by a grave and chastened beauty of style, and their solemn cadences have something of the 'grand manner' about them. The editor, Mr. Wilton, to whom Mr. Morine bequeathed his manuscripts, seems to have performed his task with great tact and judgment, and we hope that this little book will meet with the recognition that it deserves.

THE POETS' CORNER

VIII

A FEW years ago some of our minor poets tried to set Science to music, to write sonnets on the survival of the fittest and odes to Natural Selection. Socialism, and the sympathy with those who are unfit, seem, if we may judge from Miss Nesbit's remarkable volume, to be the new theme of song, the fresh subject-matter for poetry. The change has some advantages. Scientific laws are at once too abstract and too clearly defined, and even the visible arts have not yet been able to translate into any symbols of beauty the discoveries of modern science. At the Arts and Crafts Exhibition we find the cosmogony of Moses, not the cosmogony of Darwin. To Mr. Burne-Jones Man is still a fallen angel, not a greater ape. Poverty and misery, upon the other hand, are terribly concrete things. We find their incarnation everywhere and, as we are discussing a matter of art, we have no hesitation in saying

that they are not devoid of picturesqueness. The etcher or the painter finds in them 'a subject made to his hand,' and the poet has admirable opportunities of drawing weird and dramatic contrasts between the purple of the rich and the rags of the poor. From Miss Nesbit's book comes not merely the voice of sympathy but also the cry of revolution:

> This is our vengeance day. Our masters made fat with our fasting
> Shall fall before us like corn when the sickle for harvest is strong:
> Old wrongs shall give might to our arm, remembrance of wrongs shall make lasting
> The graves we will dig for our tyrants we bore with too much and too long.

The poem from which we take this stanza is remarkably vigorous, and the only consolation that we can offer to the timid and the Tories is that as long as so much strength is employed in blowing the trumpet, the sword, so far as Miss Nesbit is concerned, will probably remain sheathed. Personally, and looking at the matter from a purely artistic point of view, we prefer Miss Nesbit's gentler moments. Her eye for Nature is peculiarly keen. She has always an exquisite sense of colour and sometimes a most delicate ear for music. Many of her poems, such as *The Moat House*, *Absolution*, and *The Singing of the Magnificat* are true works of art, and *Vies Manquées* is a little gem of song, with its dainty dancing measure, its delicate and wilful fancy

and the sharp poignant note of passion that suddenly strikes across it, marring its light laughter and lending its beauty a terrible and tragic meaning.

From the sonnets we take this at random:

Not Spring—too lavish of her bud and leaf—
But Autumn with sad eyes and brows austere,
When fields are bare, and woods are brown and sere,
And leaden skies weep their enchantless grief.
Spring is so much too bright, since Spring is brief,
And in our hearts is Autumn all the year,
Least sad when the wide pastures are most drear
And fields grieve most—robbed of the last gold sheaf.

These too, the opening stanzas of *The Last Envoy*, are charming:

The Wind, that through the silent woodland blows
O'er rippling corn and dreaming pastures goes
Straight to the garden where the heart of Spring
Faints in the heart of Summer's earliest rose.

Dimpling the meadow's grassy green and grey,
By furze that yellows all the common way,
Gathering the gladness of the common broom,
And too persistent fragrance of the may—

Gathering whatever is of sweet and dear,
The wandering wind has passed away from here,
Has passed to where within your garden waits
The concentrated sweetness of the year.

But Miss Nesbit is not to be judged by mere extracts. Her work is too rich and too full for that.

Mr. Foster is an American poet who has read Hawthorne, which is wise of him, and imitated Longfellow, which is not quite so commendable. His *Rebecca the Witch* is a story of old Salem

written in the metre of *Hiawatha*, with a few rhymes thrown in, and conceived in the spirit of the author of *The Scarlet Letter*. The combination is not very satisfactory, but the poem, as a piece of fiction, has many elements of interest. Mr. Foster seems to be quite popular in America. The *Chicago Times* finds his fancies 'very playful and sunny,' and the *Indianapolis Journal* speaks of his 'tender and appreciative style.' He is certainly a clever story-teller, and *The Noah's Ark* (which 'somehow had escaped the sheriff's hand') is bright and amusing, and its pathos, like the pathos of a melodrama, is a purely picturesque element not intended to be taken too seriously. We cannot, however, recommend the definitely comic poems. They are very depressing.

Mr. John Renton Denning dedicates his book to the Duke of Connaught, who is Colonel-in-Chief of the Rifle Brigade, in which regiment Mr. Denning was once himself a private soldier. His poems show an ardent love of Keats and a profligate luxuriance of adjectives:

> And I will build a bower for thee, sweet,
> A verdurous shelter from the noonday heat,
> Thick rustling ivy, broad and green, and shining,
> With honeysuckle creeping up and twining
> Its nectared sweetness round thee; violets
> And daisies with their fringèd coronets
> And the white bells of tiny valley lilies,
> And golden-leaved narcissi—daffodillies
> Shall grow around thy dwelling—luscious fare
> Of fruit on which the sun has laughed;

this is the immature manner of *Endymion* with a vengeance and is not to be encouraged. Still, Mr. Denning is not always so anxious to reproduce the faults of his master. Sometimes he writes with wonderful grace and charm. *Sylvia*, for instance, is an exceedingly pretty poem, and *The Exile* has many powerful and picturesque lines. Mr. Denning should make a selection of his poems and publish them in better type and on better paper. The 'get-up' of his volume, to use the slang phrase of our young poets, is very bad indeed, and reflects no credit on the press of the Education Society of Bombay.

The best poem in Mr. Joseph McKim's little book is, undoubtedly, *William the Silent*. It is written in the spirited Macaulay style:

Awake, awake, ye burghers brave! shout, shout for joy and sing!
With thirty thousand at his back comes forth your hero King.
Now shake for ever from your necks the servile yoke of Spain,
And raise your arms and end for aye false Alva's cruel reign.
Ho! Maestricht, Liège, Brussels fair! pour forth your warriors brave,
And join your hands with him who comes your hearths and homes to save.

Some people like this style.

Mrs. Horace Dobell, who has arrived at her seventeenth volume of poetry, seems very angry with everybody, and writes poems to *A Human Toad* with lurid and mysterious footnotes such as —'Yet some one, *not* a friend of —— *did!* on a

certain occasion of a glib utterance of calumnies, by ——! at Hampstead.' Here indeed is a Soul's Tragedy.

'In many cases I have deliberately employed alliteration, believing that the music of a line is intensified thereby,' says Mr. Kelly in the preface to his poems, and there is certainly no reason why Mr. Kelly should not employ this 'artful aid.' Alliteration is one of the many secrets of English poetry, and as long as it is kept a secret it is admirable. Mr. Kelly, it must be admitted, uses it with becoming modesty and reserve and never suffers it to trammel the white feet of his bright and buoyant muse. His volume is, in many ways, extremely interesting. Most minor poets are at their best in sonnets, but with him it is not so. His sonnets are too narrative, too diffuse, and too lyrical. They lack concentration, and concentration is the very essence of a sonnet. His longer poems, on the other hand, have many good qualities. We do not care for *Psychossolles*, which is elaborately commonplace, but *The Flight of Calliope* has many charming passages. It is a pity that Mr. Kelly has included the poems written before the age of nineteen. Youth is rarely original.

Andiatoroctè is the title of a volume of poems by the Rev. Clarence Walworth, of Albany, N. Y. It is a word borrowed from the Indians, and should, we think, be returned to them as soon as possible. The most curious poem of the book is called *Scenes at the Holy Home:*

Jesus and Joseph at work! Hurra!
Sight never to see again,
A prentice Deity plies the saw,
While the Master ploughs with the plane.

Poems of this kind were popular in the Middle Ages when the cathedrals of every Christian country served as its theatres. They are anachronisms now, and it is odd that they should come to us from the United States. In matters of this kind we should have some protection.

THE POETS' CORNER

IX

JUDGES, like the criminal classes, have their lighter moments, and it was probably in one of his happiest and, certainly, in one of his most careless moods that Mr. Justice Denman conceived the idea of putting the early history of Rome into doggerel verse for the benefit of a little boy of the name of Jack. Poor Jack! He is still, we learn from the preface, under six years of age, and it is sad to think of the future career of a boy who is being brought up on bad history and worse poetry. Here is a passage from the learned judge's account of Romulus:

> Poor Tatius by some unknown hand
> Was soon assassinated,
> Some said by Romulus' command;
> I know not—but 'twas fated.
>
> Sole King again, this Romulus
> Play'd some fantastic tricks,
> Lictors he had, who hatchets bore
> Bound up with rods of sticks.

He treated all who thwarted him
No better than a dog,
Sometimes 'twas 'Heads off, Lictors, there!'
Sometimes 'Ho! Lictors, flog!'

Then he created Senators,
And gave them rings of gold;
Old soldiers all; their name deriv'd
From 'Senex' which means 'old.'

Knights, too, he made, good horsemen all,
Who always were at hand
To execute immediately
Whate'er he might command.

But these were of Patrician rank,
Plebeians all the rest;
Remember this distinction, Jack!
For 'tis a useful test.

The reign of Tullius Hostilius opens with a very wicked rhyme:

As Numa, dying, only left
A daughter, named Pompilia,
The Senate had to choose a King.
They choose one sadly *sillier*.

If Jack goes to the bad, Mr. Justice Denman will have much to answer for.

After such a terrible example from the Bench, it is pleasant to turn to the seats reserved for Queen's Counsel. Mr. Cooper Willis's *Tales and Legends*, if somewhat boisterous in manner, is still very spirited and clever. *The Prison of the Danes* is not at all a bad poem, and there is a great deal of eloquent, strong writing in the passage beginning:

The dying star-song of the night sinks in the dawning day,
And the dark-blue sheen is changed to green, and the green
fades into grey,
And the sleepers are roused from their slumbers, and at
last the Danesmen know
How few of all their numbers are left them by the foe.

Not much can be said of a poet who exclaims:

Oh, for the power of Byron or of Moore,
To glow with one, and with the latter soar.

And yet Mr. Moodie is one of the best of those South African poets whose works have been collected and arranged by Mr. Wilmot. Pringle, the 'father of South African verse,' comes first, of course, and his best poem is, undoubtedly, *Afar in the Desert:*

Afar in the desert I love to ride,
With the silent Bush-boy by my side:
Away, away, from the dwelling of men
By the wild-deer's haunt, by the buffalo's glen:
By valleys remote where the oribi plays,
Where the gnu, the gazelle and the hartebeest graze,
And the kúdú and eland unhunted recline
By the skirts of grey forests o'erhung with wild vine,
Where the elephant browses at peace in his wood,
And the river-horse gambols unscared in the flood,
And the mighty rhinoceros wallows at will
In the fen where the wild ass is drinking his fill.

It is not, however, a very remarkable production.

The Smouse, by Fannin, has the modern merit of incomprehensibility. It reads like something out of *The Hunting of the Snark:*

I'm a Smouse, I'm a Smouse in the wilderness wide,
The veld is my home, and the wagon's my pride:
The crack of my 'voerslag' shall sound o'er the lea,
I'm a Smouse, I'm a Smouse, and the trader is free!
I heed not the Governor, I fear not his law,
I care not for civilisation one straw,
And ne'er to 'Ompanda'—'Umgazis' I'll throw
While my arm carries fist, or my foot bears a toe!
'Trek,' 'trek,' ply the whip—touch the fore oxen's skin,
I'll warrant we'll 'go it' through thick and through thin—
Loop! loop ye oud skellums! ot Vikmaan trek jy;
I'm a Smouse, I'm a Smouse, and the trader is free!

The South African poets, as a class, are rather behind the age. They seem to think that 'Aurora' is a very novel and delightful epithet for the dawn. On the whole they depress us.

Chess, by Mr. Louis Tylor, is a sort of Christmas masque in which the *dramatis personæ* consist of some unmusical carollers, a priggish young man called Eric, and the chessmen off the board. The White Queen's Knight begins a ballad and the Black King's Bishop completes it. The Pawns sing in chorus and the Castles converse with each other. The silliness of the form makes it an absolutely unreadable book.

Mr. Williamson's *Poems of Nature and Life* are as orthodox in spirit as they are commonplace in form. A few harmless heresies of art and thought would do this poet no harm. Nearly everything that he says has been said before and said better. The only original thing in the volume is the description of Mr. Robert Buchanan's 'grandeur of mind.' This is decidedly new.

Dr. Cockle tells us that Müllner's *Guilt* and *The Ancestress* of Grillparzer are the masterpieces of German fate-tragedy. His translation of the first of these two masterpieces does not make us long for any further acquaintance with the school. Here is a specimen from the fourth act of the fate-tragedy.

SCENE VIII.

ELVIRA. HUGO.

ELVIRA (*after long silence, leaving the harp, steps to Hugo, and seeks his gaze*).

HUGO (*softly*). Though I made sacrifice of thy sweet life. The Father has forgiven. Can the wife—Forgive?

ELVIRA (*on his breast*). She can!

HUGO (*with all the warmth of love*). Dear wife!

ELVIRA (*after a pause, in deep sorrow*). Must it be so, beloved one?

HUGO (*sorry to have betrayed himself*). What?

In his preface to *The Circle of Seasons*, a series of hymns and verses for the seasons of the Church, the Rev. T. B. Dover expresses a hope that this well-meaning if somewhat tedious book 'may be of value to those many earnest people to whom the subjective aspect of truth is helpful.' The poem beginning

> Lord, in the inn of my poor worthless heart
> Guests come and go; but there is room for Thee,

has some merit and might be converted into a good sonnet. The majority of the poems, however, are quite worthless. There seems to be some curious connection between piety and poor rhymes.

Lord Henry Somerset's verse is not so good as his music. Most of the *Songs of Adieu* are marred by their excessive sentimentality of feeling and by the commonplace character of their weak and lax form. There is nothing that is new and little that is true in verse of this kind:

> The golden leaves are falling,
> Falling one by one,
> Their tender 'Adieux' calling
> To the cold autumnal sun.
> The trees in the keen and frosty air
> Stand out against the sky,
> 'Twould seem they stretch their branches bare
> To Heaven in agony.

It can be produced in any quantity. Lord Henry Somerset has too much heart and too little art to make a good poet, and such art as he does possess is devoid of almost every intellectual quality and entirely lacking in any intellectual strength. He has nothing to say and says it.

Mrs. Cora M. Davis is eloquent about the splendours of what the authoress of *The Circle of Seasons* calls 'this earthly ball.'

> Let's sing the beauties of this grand old earth,

she cries, and proceeds to tell how

> Imagination paints old Egypt's former glory,
> Of mighty temples reaching heavenward,
> Of grim, colossal statues, whose barbaric story
> The caustic pens of erudition still record.
> Whose ancient cities of glittering minarets
> Reflect the gold of Afric's gorgeous sunsets.

'The caustic pens of erudition' is quite delightful and will be appreciated by all Egyptologists. There is also a charming passage in the same poem on the pictures of the Old Masters:

> the mellow richness of whose tints impart,
> By contrast, greater delicacy still to modern art.

This seems to us the highest form of optimism we have ever come across in art criticism. It is American in origin, Mrs. Davis, as her biographer tells us, having been born in Alabama, Genesee co., N. Y.

THE POETS' CORNER

X

IS Mr. Alfred Austin among the Socialists? Has somebody converted the respectable editor of the respectable *National Review?* Has even dullness become revolutionary? From a poem in Mr. Austin's last volume this would seem to be the case. It is perhaps unfair to take our rhymers too seriously. Between the casual fancies of a poet and the callous facts of prose there is, or at least there should be, a wide difference. But since the poem in question, *Two Visions*, as Mr. Austin calls it, was begun in 1863 and revised in 1889 we may regard it as fully representative of Mr. Austin's mature views. He gives us, at any rate, in its somewhat lumbering and pedestrian verses, his conception of the perfect state:

> Fearless, unveiled, and unattended
> Strolled maidens to and fro:
> Youths looked respect, but never bended
> Obsequiously low.

And each with other, sans condition,
Held parley brief or long,
Without provoking *coarse suspicion*
Of marriage, or of wrong.

All were well clad, and none were better,
And gems beheld I none,
Save where there hung a jewelled fetter,
Symbolic, in the sun.

I saw a noble-looking maiden
Close Dante's solemn book,
And go, with crate of linen laden,
And wash it in the brook.

Anon, a broad-browed *poet, dragging*
A load of logs along,
To warm his hearth, withal not flagging
In current of his song.

Each one some handicraft attempted
Or helped to till the soil:
None but the aged were exempted
From communistic toil.

Such an expression as 'coarse suspicion of marriage' is not very fortunate; the log-rolling poet of the fifth stanza is an ideal that we have already realised and one in which we had but little comfort, and the fourth stanza leaves us in doubt whether Mr. Austin means that washerwomen are to take to reading Dante, or that students of Italian literature are to wash their own clothes. But, on the whole, though Mr. Austin's vision of the *citta divina* of the future is not very inspiriting, it is certainly extremely interesting as a sign of the times, and it is evident from the two con-

cluding lines of the following stanzas that there will be no danger of the intellect being overworked:

Age lorded not, nor rose the hectic
Up to the cheek of youth;
But reigned throughout their dialectic
Sobriety of truth.

And if a long-held contest tended
To ill-defined result,
It was by calm consent suspended
As over-difficult.

Mr. Austin, however, has other moods, and, perhaps, he is at his best when he is writing about flowers. Occasionally he wearies the reader by tedious enumerations of plants, lacking indeed reticence and tact and selection in many of his descriptions, but, as a rule, he is very pleasant when he is babbling of green fields. How pretty these stanzas from the dedication are!

When vines, just newly burgeoned, link
Their hands to join the dance of Spring,
Green lizards glisten from cleft and chink,
And almond blossoms rosy pink
Cluster and perch, ere taking wing;

Where over strips of emerald wheat
Glimmer red peach and snowy pear,
And nightingales all day long repeat
Their love-song, not less glad than sweet
They chant in sorrow and gloom elsewhere;

Where purple iris-banners scale
Defending walls and crumbling ledge,
And virgin windflowers, lithe and frail,
Now mantling red, now trembling pale,
Peep out from furrow and hide in hedge.

Some of the sonnets also (notably, one entitled *When Acorns Fall*) are very charming, and though, as a whole, *Love's Widowhood* is tedious and prolix, still it contains some very felicitous touches. We wish, however, that Mr. Austin would not write such lines as

> Pippins of every sort, and *codlins manifold.*

'Codlins manifold' is a monstrous expression.

Mr. W. J. Linton's fame as a wood-engraver has somewhat obscured the merits of his poetry. His *Claribel and Other Poems*, published in 1865, is now a scarce book, and far more scarce is the collection of lyrics which he printed in 1887 at his own press and brought out under the title of *Love-Lore*. The large and handsome volume that now lies before us contains nearly all these later poems as well as a selection from *Claribel* and many renderings, in the original metre, of French poems ranging from the thirteenth century to our own day. A portrait of Mr. Linton is prefixed, and the book is dedicated 'To William Bell Scott, my friend for nearly fifty years.' As a poet Mr. Linton is always fanciful with a studied fancifulness, and often felicitous with a chance felicity. He is fascinated by our seventeenth-century singers, and has, here and there, succeeded in catching something of their quaintness and not a little of their charm. There is a pleasant flavour about his verse. It is entirely free from violence and from vagueness, those two besetting sins of so much modern poetry. It is clear in outline and re-

strained in form, and, at its best, has much that is light and lovely about it. How graceful, for instance, this is!

BARE FEET

O fair white feet! O dawn-white feet
Of Her my hope may claim!
Bare-footed through the dew she came
Her Love to meet.

Star-glancing feet, the windflowers sweet
Might envy, without shame,
As through the grass they lightly came,
Her Love to meet.

O Maiden sweet, with flower-kiss'd feet!
My heart your footstool name!
Bare-footed through the dew she came,
Her Love to meet.

'Vindicate Gemma!' was Longfellow's advice to Miss Héloïse Durant when she proposed to write a play about Dante. Longfellow, it may be remarked, was always on the side of domesticity. It was the secret of his popularity. We cannot say, however, that Miss Durant has made us like Gemma better. She is not exactly the Xantippe whom Boccaccio describes, but she is very boring, for all that:

GEMMA. The more thou meditat'st, more mad art thou.
Clowns, with their love, can cheer poor wives' hearts more
O'er black bread and goat's cheese than thou canst mine
O'er red Vernaccia, spite of all thy learning!
Care I how tortured spirits feel in hell?

DANTE. Thou tortur'st mine.

GEMMA. Or how souls sing in heaven?

DANTE. Would I were there.

GEMMA. All folly, naught but folly.

DANTE. Thou canst not understand the mandates given
To poets by their goddess Poesy. . . .

GEMMA. Canst ne'er speak prose? Why daily clothe thy thoughts
In strangest garb, as if thy wits played fool
At masquerade, where no man knows a maid
From matron? Fie on poets' mutterings!

DANTE. (*to himself*). If, then, the soul absorbed at last to whole—

GEMMA. Fie! fie! I say. Art thou bewitched?

DANTE. O! peace.

GEMMA. Dost thou deem me deaf and dumb?

DANTE. O! that thou wert.

Dante is certainly rude, but Gemma is dreadful. The play is well meant but it is lumbering and heavy, and the blank verse has absolutely no merit.

Father O'Flynn and Other Irish Lyrics, by Mr. A. P. Graves, is a collection of poems in the style of Lover. Most of them are written in dialect, and, for the benefit of English readers, notes are appended in which the uninitiated are informed that 'brogue' means a boot, that 'mavourneen' means my dear, and that 'astore' is a term of affection. Here is a specimen of Mr. Graves's work:

'Have you e'er a new song,
My Limerick Poet,
To help us along
Wid this terrible boat,
Away over to Tork?'
'Arrah I understand;
For all of your work,
'Twill tighten you, boys,
To cargo that sand
To the overside strand,
Wid the current so strong
Unless you've a song—
A song to lighten and brighten you, boys. . . .'

It is a very dreary production and does not 'lighten and brighten' us a bit. The whole volume should be called *The Lucubrations of a Stage Irishman.*

The anonymous author of *The Judgment of the City* is a sort of bad Blake. So at least his prelude seems to suggest:

Time, the old viol-player,
For ever thrills his ancient strings
With the flying bow of Fate, and thence
Much discord, but some music, brings.

His ancient strings are truth,
Love, hate, hope, fear;
And his choicest melody
Is the song of the faithful seer.

As he progresses, however, he develops into a kind of inferior Clough and writes heavy hexameters upon modern subjects:

Here for a moment stands in the light at the door of a play-
house,
One who is dignified, masterly, hard in the pride of his
station;
Here too, the stateliest of matrons, sour in the pride of
her station;
With them their daughter, sad-faced and listless, half-
crushed to their likeness.

He has every form of sincerity except the sincerity of the artist, a defect that he shares with most of our popular writers.

A MODERN EPIC

IN an age of hurry like ours the appearance of an epic poem more than five thousand lines in length cannot but be regarded as remarkable. Whether such a form of art is the one most suited to our century is a question. Edgar Allan Poe insisted that no poem should take more than an hour to read, the essence of a work of art being its unity of impression and of effect. Still, it would be difficult to accept absolutely a canon of art which would place the *Divine Comedy* on the shelf and deprive us of the *Bothwell* of Mr. Swinburne. A work of art is to be estimated by its beauty, not by its size, and in Mr. Wills's *Melchior* there is beauty of a rich and lofty character.

Remembering the various arts which have yielded up their secrets to Mr. Wills, it is interesting to note in his poems, here the picturesque vision of the painter, here the psychology of the novelist, and here the playwright's sense of dramatic situation. Yet these things, which are the elements of his work of art though we arbitrarily

separate them in criticism, are in the work itself blended and made one by the true imaginative and informing power. For *Melchior* is not a piece of poetic writing merely; it is that very rare thing, a poem.

It is dedicated to Mr. Robert Browning, not inappropriately, as it deals with that problem of the possible expression of life through music, the value of which as a motive in poetry Mr. Browning was the first to see. The story is this. In one of the little Gothic towns of Northern Germany lives Melchior, a dreamer and a musician. One night he rescues by chance a girl from drowning and lodges her in a convent of holy women. He grows to love her and to see in her the incarnation of that St. Cecily whom, with mystic and almost mediæval passion, he had before adored. But a priest separates them, and Melchior goes mad. An old doctor, who makes a study of insanity, determines to try and cure him, and induces the girl to appear to him, disguised as St. Cecily herself, while he sits brooding at the organ. Thinking her at first to be indeed the Saint he had worshipped, Melchior falls in ecstasy at her feet, but soon discovering the trick kills her in a sudden paroxysm of madness. The horror of the act restores his reason; but, with the return of sanity, the dreams and visions of the artist's nature begin to vanish; the musician sees the world not through a glass but face to face, and he dies just as the world is awakening to his music.

The character of Melchior, who inherits his music from his father, and from his mother his mysticism, is extremely fascinating as a psychological study. Mr. Wills has made a most artistic use of that scientific law of heredity which has already strongly influenced the literature of this century, and to which we owe Dr. Holmes's fantastic *Elsie Venner*, *Daniel Deronda*—that dullest of masterpieces—and the dreadful Rougon-Macquart family with whose misdeeds M. Zola is never weary of troubling us.

Blanca, the girl, is a somewhat slight sketch, but then, like Ophelia, she is merely the occasion of a tragedy and not its heroine. The rest of the characters are most powerfully drawn and create themselves simply and swiftly before us as the story proceeds, the method of the practised dramatist being here of great value.

As regards the style, we notice some accidental assonances of rhyme which in an unrhymed poem are never pleasing; and the unfinished short line of five or six syllables, however legitimate on the stage where the actor himself can make the requisite musical pause, is not a beauty in a blank verse poem, and is employed by Mr. Wills far too frequently. Still, taken as a whole, the style has the distinction of noble melody.

There are many passages which, did space permit us, we would like to quote, but we must content ourselves with saying that in *Melchior* we find not merely pretty gems of rich imagery and delicate fancy, but a fine imaginative treatment

of many of the most important modern problems, notably of the relation of life to art. It is a pleasure to herald a poem which combines so many elements of strength and beauty.

A BEVY OF POETS

THIS spring the little singers are out before the little sparrows and have already begun chirruping. Here are four volumes already, and who knows how many more will be given to us before the laburnums blossom? The best-bound volume must, of course, have precedence. It is called *Echoes of Memory*, by Atherton Furlong, and is cased in creamy vellum and tied with ribbons of yellow silk. Mr. Furlong's charm is the unsullied sweetness of his simplicity. Indeed, we can strongly recommend to the School-Board the *Lines on the Old Town Pump* as eminently suitable for recitation by children. Such a verse, for instance, as:

> I hear the little children say
> (For the tale will never die)
> How the old pump flowed both night and day
> When the brooks and the wells ran dry,

has all the ring of Macaulay in it, and is a form of poetry which cannot possibly harm anybody, even if translated into French. Any inaccurate

ideas of the laws of nature which the children might get from the passage in question could easily be corrected afterwards by a lecture on Hydrostatics. The poem, however, which gives us most pleasure is the one called *The Dear Old Knocker on the Door*. It is appropriately illustrated by Mr. Tristram Ellis. We quote the concluding verses of the first and last stanzas:

> Blithe voices then so dear
> Send up their shouts once more,
> Then sounds again on mem'ry's ear
> The dear old knocker on the door.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> When mem'ry turns the key
> Where time has placed my score,
> Encased 'mid treasured thoughts must be
> The dear old knocker on the door.

The cynic may mock at the subject of these verses, but we do not. Why not an ode on a knocker? Does not Victor Hugo's tragedy of *Lucrèce Borgia* turn on the defacement of a door-plate? Mr. Furlong must not be discouraged. Perhaps he will write poetry some day. If he does we would earnestly appeal to him to give up calling a cock 'proud chanticleer.' Few synonyms are so depressing.

Having been lured by the Circe of a white vellum binding into the region of the pump and doormat, we turn to a modest little volume by Mr. Bowling of St. John's College, Cambridge, entitled *Sagittulæ*. And they are indeed delicate little arrows, for they are winged with the light-

ness of the lyric and barbed daintily with satire. *Æsthesis and Athletes* is a sweet idyll, and nothing can be more pathetic than the *Tragedy of the XIX. Century*, which tells of a luckless examiner condemned in his public capacity to pluck for her Little-go the girl graduate whom he privately adores. Girton seems to be having an important influence on the Cambridge school of poetry. We are not surprised. The Graces are the Graces always, even when they wear spectacles.

Then comes *Tuberose and Meadowsweet*, by Mr. Mark André Raffalovich. This is really a remarkable little volume, and contains many strange and beautiful poems. To say of these poems that they are unhealthy and bring with them the heavy odours of the hothouse is to point out neither their defect nor their merit, but their quality merely. And though Mr. Raffalovich is not a wonderful poet, still he is a subtle artist in poetry. Indeed, in his way he is a boyish master of curious music and of fantastic rhyme, and can strike on the lute of language so many lovely chords that it seems a pity he does not know how to pronounce the title of his book and the theme of his songs. For he insists on making 'tuberose' a trisyllable always, as if it were a potato blossom and not a flower shaped like a tiny trumpet of ivory. However, for the sake of his meadowsweet and his spring-green binding this must be forgiven him. And though he cannot pronounce 'tuberose' aright, at least he can sing of it exquisitely.

Finally we come to *Sturm und Drang*, the work of an anonymous writer. Opening the volume at hazard we come across these graceful lines:

> How sweet to spend in this blue bay
> The close of life's disastrous day,
> To watch the morn break faintly free
> Across the greyness of the sea,
> What time Memnonian music fills
> The shadows of the dewy hills.

Well, here is the touch of a poet, and we pluck up heart and read on. The book is a curious but not inartistic combination of the mental attitude of Mr. Matthew Arnold with the style of Lord Tennyson. Sometimes, as in *The Sicilian Hermit*, we get merely the metre of *Locksley Hall* without its music, merely its fine madness and not its fine magic. Still, elsewhere there is good work, and *Caliban in East London* has a great deal of power in it, though we do not like the adjective 'knockery' even in a poem on Whitechapel.

On the whole, to those who watch the culture of the age, the most interesting thing in young poets is not so much what they invent as what masters they follow. A few years ago it was all Mr. Swinburne. That era has happily passed away. The mimicry of passion is the most intolerable of all poses. Now, it is all Lord Tennyson, and that is better. For a young writer can gain more from the study of a literary poet than from the study of a lyrist. He may become the pupil of the one, but he can never be anything

but the slave of the other. And so we are glad to see in this volume direct and noble praise of him

> Who plucked in English meadows flowers fair
> As any that in unforgotten stave
> Vied with the orient gold of Venus' hair
> Or fringed the murmur of the Ægean wave,

which are the fine words in which this anonymous poet pays his tribute to the Laureate.

In reply to the review *A Bevy of Poets* the following letter was published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* on March 30, 1885, under the title of

THE ROOT OF THE MATTER

Sir,—I am sorry not to be able to accept the graceful etymology of your reviewer who calls me to task for not knowing how to pronounce the title of my book *Tuberose and Meadowsweet*. I insist, he fancifully says, 'on making "tuberose" a trisyllable always, as if it were a potato blossom and not a flower shaped like a tiny trumpet of ivory.' Alas! tuberose is a trisyllable if properly derived from the Latin *tuberosus*, the lumpy flower, having nothing to do with roses or with trumpets of ivory in name any more than in nature. I am reminded by a great living poet that another correctly wrote:

Or as the moonlight fills the open sky
Struggling with darkness—as a tuberose
Peoples some Indian dell with scents which lie
Like clouds above the flower from which they rose.

In justice to Shelley, whose lines I quote, your readers will admit that I have good authority for making a trisyllable of tuberose.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

ANDRÉ RAFFALOVICH.

March 28.

PARNASSUS *versus* PHILOLOGY

To the Editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette.*

Sir,—I am deeply distressed to hear that tuberose is so called from its being a 'lumpy flower.' It is not at all lumpy, and, even if it were, no poet should be heartless enough to say so. Henceforth, there really must be two derivations for every word, one for the poet and one for the scientist. And in the present case the poet will dwell on the tiny trumpets of ivory into which the white flower breaks, and leave to the man of science horrid allusions to its supposed lumpiness and indiscreet revelations of its private life below ground. In fact, 'tuber' as a derivation is disgraceful. On the roots of verbs Philology may be allowed to speak, but on the roots of flowers she must keep silence. We cannot allow her to dig up Parnassus. And, as regards the word

being a trisyllable, I am reminded by a great living poet that another correctly wrote:

> And the jessamine faint, and the sweet tuberose,
> The sweetest flower for scent that blows;
> And all rare blossoms from every clime
> Grew in that garden in perfect prime.

In justice to Shelley, whose lines I quote, your readers will admit that I have good authority for making a dissyllable of tuberose.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant, THE CRITIC,

WHO HAD TO READ FOUR VOLUMES OF MODERN POETRY.

March 30.

MODERN GREEK POETRY

ODYSSEUS, not Achilles, is the type of the modern Greek. Merchandise has taken precedence of the Muses and politics are preferred to Parnassus. Yet by the Illissus there are sweet singers; the nightingales are not silent in Colonus; and from the garden of Greek nineteenth-century poetry Miss Edmonds has made a very pleasing anthology; and in pouring the wine from the golden into the silver cup she has still kept much of the beauty of the original. Even when translated into English, modern Greek lyrics are preferable to modern Greek loans.

As regards the quality of this poetry, if the old Greek spirit can be traced at all, it is the spirit of Tyrtæus and of Theocritus. The warlike ballads of Rhigas and Aristotle Valaôritês have a fine ring of music and of passion in them, and the folk-songs of George Drosinês are full of charming pictures of rustic life and delicate idylls of shepherds' courtships. These we acknowledge

that we prefer. The flutes of the sheepfold are more delightful than the clarions of battle. Still, poetry played such a noble part in the Greek War of Independence that it is impossible not to look with reverence on the spirited war-songs that meant so much to those who were fighting for liberty and mean so much even now to their children.

Other poets besides Drosinês have taken the legends that linger among the peasants and given to them an artistic form. The song of *The Seasons* is full of beauty, and there is a delightful poem on *The Building of St. Sophia*, which tells how the design of that noble building was suggested by the golden honeycomb of a bee which had flown from the king's palace with a crumb of blessed bread that had fallen from the king's hands. The story is still to be found in Thrace.

One of the ballads, also, has a good deal of spirit. It is by Kostês Palamas and was suggested by an interesting incident which occurred some years ago in Athens. In the summer of 1881 there was borne through the streets the remains of an aged woman in the complete costume of a Pallikar, which dress she had worn at the siege of Missolonghi and in it had requested to be buried. The life of this real Greek heroine should be studied by those who are investigating the question of wherein womanliness consists. The view the poet takes of her is, we need hardly say, very different from that which Canon Liddon would entertain. Yet it is none the less fine on this account, and

we are glad that this old lady has been given a place in art. The volume is, on the whole, delightful reading, and though not much can be said for lines like these:

> There *cometh* from the West
> The timid starry *bands*,

still, the translations are in many instances most felicitous and their style most pleasing.

NEWS FROM PARNASSUS

THAT most delightful of all French critics, M. Edmond Scherer, has recently stated in an article on Wordsworth that the English read far more poetry than any other European nation. We sincerely hope this may be true, not merely for the sake of the public but for the sake of the poets also. It would be sad indeed if the many volumes of poems that are every year published in London found no readers but the authors themselves and the authors' relations; and the real philanthropist should recognise it as part of his duties to buy every new book of verse that appears. Sometimes, we acknowledge, he will be disappointed, often he will be bored; still now and then he will be amply rewarded for his reckless benevolence.

Mr. George Francis Armstrong's *Stories of Wicklow*, for instance, is most pleasant reading. Mr. Armstrong is already well known as the author of *Ugone*, *King Saul* and other dramas, and his latest volume shows that the power and

passion of his early work has not deserted him. Most modern Irish poetry is purely political and deals with the wickedness of the landlords and the Tories; but Mr. Armstrong sings of the picturesqueness of Erin, not of its politics. He tells us very charmingly of the magic of its mists and the melody of its colour, and draws a most captivating picture of the peasants of the county Wicklow, whom he describes as

> A kindly folk in vale and moor,
> Unvexed with rancours, frank and free
> In mood and manners—rich with poor
> Attuned in happiest amity:
> Where still the cottage door is wide,
> The stranger welcomed at the hearth,
> And pleased the humbler hearts confide
> Still in the friend of gentler birth.

The most ambitious poem in the volume is *De Verdun of Darragh.* It is at once lyrical and dramatic, and though its manner reminds us of Browning and its method of *Maud,* still all through it there is a personal and individual note. Mr. Armstrong also carefully observes the rules of decorum, and, as he promises his readers in a preface, keeps quite clear of 'the seas of sensual art.' In fact, an elderly maiden lady could read this volume without a blush, a thrill, or even an emotion.

Dr. Goodchild does not possess Mr. Armstrong's literary touch, but his *Somnia Medici* is distinguished by a remarkable quality of forcible and direct expression. The poem that opens his

volume, *Myrrha, or A Dialogue on Creeds*, is quite as readable as a metrical dialogue on creeds could possibly be; and *The Organ Builder* is a most romantic story charmingly told. Dr. Goodchild seems to be an ardent disciple of Mr. Browning, and though he may not be able to reproduce the virtues of his master, at least he can echo his defects very cleverly. Such a verse as—

> 'Tis the subtle essayal
> Of the Jews and Judas,
> Such lying lisp
> Might hail a will-o'-the-wisp,
> A thin somebody—Theudas—

is an excellent example of low comedy in poetry. One of the best poems in the book is *The Ballad of Three Kingdoms*. Indeed, if the form were equal to the conception, it would be a delightful work of art; but Dr. Goodchild, though he may be a master of metres, is not a master of music yet. His verse is often harsh and rugged. On the whole, however, his volume is clever and interesting.

Mr. Keene has not, we believe, a great reputation in England as yet, but in India he seems to be well known. From a collection of criticisms appended to his volume it appears that the *Overland Mail* has christened him the Laureate of Hindostan and that the *Allahabad Pioneer* once compared him to Keats. He is a pleasant rhymer, as rhymers go, and, though we strongly object to his putting the Song of Solomon into bad blank verse, still we are quite ready to admire

his translations of the *Pervigilium Veneris* and of Omar Khayyam. We wish he would not write sonnets with fifteen lines. A fifteen-line sonnet is as bad a monstrosity as a sonnet in dialogue. The volume has the merit of being very small, and contains many stanzas quite suitable for valentines.

Finally we come to *Procris and Other Poems*, by Mr. W. G. Hole. Mr. Hole is apparently a very young writer. His work, at least, is full of crudities, his syntax is defective, and his grammar is questionable. And yet, when all is said, in the one poem of *Procris* it is easy to recognise the true poetic ring. Elsewhere the volume is amateurish and weak. *The Spanish Main* was suggested by a leader in the *Daily Telegraph*, and bears all the traces of its lurid origin. *Sir Jocellyn's Trust* is a sort of pseudo-Tennysonian idyll in which the damozel says to her gallant rescuer, 'Come, come, Sir Knight, I catch my death of cold,' and recompenses him with

> What noble minds
> Regard the first reward,—an orphan's thanks.

Nunc Dimittis is dull and *The Wandering Jew* dreadful; but *Procris* is a beautiful poem. The richness and variety of its metaphors, the music of its lines, the fine opulence of its imagery, all seem to point to a new poet. Faults, it is true, there are in abundance; but they are faults that come from want of trouble, not from want of taste. Mr. Hole shows often a rare and exquisite

sense of beauty and a marvellous power of poetic vision, and if he will cultivate the technique of his craft a little more we have no doubt but that he will some day give us work worthy to endure. It is true that there is more promise than perfection in his verse at present, yet it is a promise that seems likely to be fulfilled.

SONGS OF DE BÉRANGER

A PHILOSOPHIC politician once remarked that the best possible form of government is an absolute monarchy tempered by street ballads. Without at all agreeing with this aphorism we still cannot but regret that the new democracy does not use poetry as a means for the expression of political opinion. The Socialists, it is true, have been heard singing the later poems of Mr. William Morris, but the street ballad is really dead in England. The fact is that most modern poetry is so artificial in its form, so individual in its essence and so literary in its style, that the people as a body are little moved by it, and when they have grievances against the capitalist or the aristocrat they prefer strikes to sonnets and rioting to rondels.

Possibly, Mr. William Toynbee's pleasant little volume of translations from Béranger may be the herald of a new school. Béranger had all the qualifications for a popular poet. He wrote to be sung more than to be read; he preferred

the Pont Neuf to Parnassus; he was patriotic as well as romantic, and humorous as well as humane. Translations of poetry as a rule are merely misrepresentations, but the muse of Béranger is so simple and naïve that she can wear our English dress with ease and grace, and Mr. Toynbee has kept much of the mirth and music of the original. Here and there, undoubtedly, the translation could be improved upon; 'rapiers' for instance is an abominable rhyme to 'forefathers'; 'the hated arms of Albion' in the same poem is a very feeble rendering of 'le léopard de l'Anglais,' and such a verse as

> 'Mid France's miracles of art,
> Rare trophies won from art's own land,
> I've lived to see with burning heart
> The fog-bred poor triumphant stand,

reproduces very inadequately the charm of the original:

> Dans nos palais, où, près de la victoire,
> Brillaient les arts, doux fruits des beaux climats,
> J'ai vu du Nord les peuplades sans gloire,
> De leurs manteaux secouer les frimas.

On the whole, however, Mr. Toynbee's work is good; *Les Champs*, for example, is very well translated, and so are the two delightful poems *Rosette* and *Ma République;* and there is a good deal of spirit in *Le Marquis de Carabas:*

> Whom have we here in conqueror's *rôle?*
> Our grand old Marquis, bless his soul!
> Whose grand old charger (mark his bone!)
> Has borne him back to claim his own.

Note, if you please, the grand old style
In which he nears his grand old pile;
With what an air of grand old state
He waves that blade immaculate!
Hats off, hats off, for my lord to pass,
The grand old Marquis of Carabas!—

though 'that blade immaculate' has hardly got the sting of 'un sabre innocent'; and in the fourth verse of the same poem, 'Marquise, you'll have the bed-chamber' does not very clearly convey the sense of the line 'La Marquise a le tabouret.' The best translation in the book is *The Court Suit* (L'Habit de Cour), and if Mr. Toynbee will give us some more work as clever as this we shall be glad to see a second volume from his pen. Béranger is not nearly well enough known in England, and though it is always better to read a poet in the original, still translations have their value as echoes have their music.

THE POETRY OF THE PEOPLE

THE Countess Martinengo deserves well of all poets, peasants and publishers. Folk-lore is so often treated nowadays merely from the point of view of the comparative mythologist, that it is really delightful to come across a book that deals with the subject simply as literature. For the Folk-tale is the father of all fiction as the Folk-song is the mother of all poetry; and in the games, the tales and the ballads of primitive people it is easy to see the germs of such perfected forms of art as the drama, the novel and the epic. It is, of course, true that the highest expression of life is to be found not in the popular songs, however poetical, of any nation, but in the great masterpieces of self-conscious Art; yet it is pleasant sometimes to leave the summit of Parnassus to look at the wild-flowers in the valley, and to turn from the lyre of Apollo to listen to the reed of Pan. We can still listen to it. To this day, the vineyard dressers of Calabria will mock the passer-by with satirical verses as they used to do in the

old pagan days, and the peasants of the olive woods of Provence answer each other in amœbæan strains. The Sicilian shepherd has not yet thrown his pipe aside, and the children of modern Greece sing the swallow-song through the villages in spring-time, though Theognis is more than two thousand years dead. Nor is this popular poetry merely the rhythmic expression of joy and sorrow; it is in the highest degree imaginative; and taking its inspiration directly from nature it abounds in realistic metaphor and in picturesque and fantastic imagery. It must, of course, be admitted that there is a conventionality of nature as there is a conventionality of art, and that certain forms of utterance are apt to become stereotyped by too constant use; yet, on the whole, it is impossible not to recognise in the Folk-songs that the Countess Martinengo has brought together one strong dominant note of fervent and flawless sincerity. Indeed, it is only in the more terrible dramas of the Elizabethan age that we can find any parallel to the Corsican *voceri* with their shrill intensity of passion, their awful frenzies of grief and hate. And yet, ardent as the feeling is, the form is nearly always beautiful. Now and then, in the poems of the extreme South one meets with a curious crudity of realism, but, as a rule, the sense of beauty prevails.

Some of the Folk-poems in this book have all the lightness and loveliness of lyrics, all of them have that sweet simplicity of pure song by which

mirth finds its own melody and mourning its own music, and even where there are conceits of thought and expression they are conceits born of fancy not of affectation. Herrick himself might have envied that wonderful love-song of Provence:

If thou wilt be the falling dew
And fall on me alway,
Then I will be the white, white rose
On yonder thorny spray.
If thou wilt be the white, white rose
On yonder thorny spray,
Then I will be the honey-bee
And kiss thee all the day.

If thou wilt be the honey-bee
And kiss me all the day,
Then I will be in yonder heaven
The star of brightest ray.
If thou wilt be in yonder heaven
The star of brightest ray,
Then I will be the dawn, and we
Shall meet at break of day.

How charming also is this lullaby by which the Corsican mother sings her babe to sleep!

Gold and pearls my vessel lade,
Silk and cloth the cargo be,
All the sails are of brocade
Coming from beyond the sea;
And the helm of finest gold,
Made a wonder to behold.
Fast awhile in slumber lie;
Sleep, my child, and hushaby.

After you were born full soon,
You were christened all aright;
Godmother she was the moon,
Godfather the sun so bright.
All the stars in heaven told
Wore their necklaces of gold.
Fast awhile in slumber lie;
Sleep, my child, and hushaby.

Or this from Roumania:

Sleep, my daughter, sleep an hour;
Mother's darling gilliflower.
Mother rocks thee, standing near,
She will wash thee in the clear
Waters that from fountains run,
To protect thee from the sun.

Sleep, my darling, sleep an hour,
Grow thou as the gilliflower.
As a tear-drop be thou white,
As a willow tall and slight;
Gentle as the ring-doves are,
And be lovely as a star!

We hardly know what poems are sung to English babies, but we hope they are as beautiful as these two. Blake might have written them.

The Countess Martinengo has certainly given us a most fascinating book. In a volume of moderate dimensions, not too long to be tiresome nor too brief to be disappointing, she has collected together the best examples of modern Folk-songs, and with her as a guide the lazy reader lounging in his armchair may wander from the melancholy pine-forests of the North to Sicily's orange-groves and the pomegranate gardens of Armenia,

and listen to the singing of those to whom poetry is a passion, not a profession, and whose art, coming from inspiration and not from schools, if it has the limitations, at least has also the loveliness of its origin, and is one with blowing grasses and the flowers of the field.

THE CHILDREN OF THE POETS

THE idea of this book is exceedingly charming. As children themselves are the perfect flowers of life, so a collection of the best poems written on children should be the most perfect of all anthologies. Yet, the book itself is not by any means a success. Many of the loveliest child-poems in our literature are excluded and not a few feeble and trivial poems are inserted. The editor's work is characterised by sins of omission and of commission, and the collection, consequently, is very incomplete and very unsatisfactory. Andrew Marvell's exquisite poem *The Picture of Little T. C.*, for instance, does not appear in Mr. Robertson's volume, nor the *Young Love* of the same author, nor the beautiful elegy Ben Jonson wrote on the death of Salathiel Pavy, the little boy-actor of his plays. Waller's verses also, *To My Young Lady Lucy Sidney*, deserve a place in an anthology of this kind, and so do Mr. Matthew Arnold's lines *To a Gipsy Child*, and Edgar Allan Poe's *Annabel Lee*, a little lyric

full of strange music and strange romance. There is possibly much to be said in favour of such a poem as that which ends with

> And I thank my God with falling tears
> For the things in the bottom drawer:

but how different it is from

> *I* was a child, and *she* was a child,
> In this kingdom by the sea;
> But we loved with a love that was more than love—
> I and my Annabel Lee;
> With a love that the wingèd Seraphs of Heaven
> Coveted her and me.

The selection from Blake, again, is very incomplete, many of the loveliest poems being excluded, such as those on *The Little Girl Lost* and *The Little Girl Found*, the *Cradle Song*, *Infant Joy*, and others; nor can we find Sir Henry Wotton's *Hymn upon the Birth of Prince Charles*, Sir William Jones's dainty four-line epigram on *The Babe*, or the delightful lines *To T. L. H., A Child*, by Charles Lamb.

The gravest omission, however, is certainly that of Herrick. Not a single poem of his appears in Mr. Robertson's collection. And yet no English poet has written of children with more love and grace and delicacy. His *Ode on the Birth of Our Saviour*, his poem *To His Saviour, A Child: A Present by a Child*, his *Graces for Children*, and his many lovely epitaphs on children are all of them exquisite works of art, simple, sweet and sincere.

An English anthology of child-poems that excludes Herrick is as an English garden without its roses and an English woodland without its singing birds; and for one verse of Herrick we would gladly give in exchange even those long poems by Mr. Ashby-Sterry, Miss Menella Smedley, and Mr. Lewis Morris (of Penrhyn), to which Mr. Robertson has assigned a place in his collection. Mr. Robertson, also, should take care when he publishes a poem to publish it correctly. Mr. Bret Harte's *Dickens in Camp*, for instance, is completely spoiled by two ridiculous misprints. In the first line 'dimpling' is substituted for 'drifting' to the entire ruin of rhyme and reason, and in the ninth verse 'the *pensive* glory that fills the Kentish hills' appears as 'the *Persian* glory. . .' with a large capital P! Mistakes such as these are quite unpardonable, and make one feel that, perhaps, after all it was fortunate for Herrick that he was left out. A poet can survive everything but a misprint.

As for Mr. Robertson's preface, like most of the prefaces in the Canterbury Series, it is very carelessly written. Such a sentence as 'I . . . believe that Mrs. Piatt's poems, in particular, will come to many readers, fresh, as well as delightful contributions from across the ocean,' is painful to read. Nor is the matter much better than the manner. It is fantastic to say that Raphael's pictures of the Madonna and Child dealt a deadly blow to the monastic life, and to say, with reference to Greek art, that 'Cupid by

the side of Venus enables us to forget that most of her sighs are 'wanton' is a very crude bit of art criticism indeed. Wordsworth, again, should hardly be spoken of as one who 'was not, in the general, a man from whom human sympathies welled profusely,' but this criticism is as nothing compared to the passage where Mr. Robertson tells us that the scene between Arthur and Hubert in *King John* is not true to nature because the child's pleadings for his life are playful as well as piteous. Indeed, Mr. Robertson, forgetting Mamillius as completely as he misunderstands Arthur, states very clearly that Shakespeare has not given us any deep readings of child nature. Paradoxes are always charming, but judgments such as these are not paradoxical; they are merely provincial.

On the whole, Mr. Robertson's book will not do. It is, we fully admit, an industrious compilation, but it is not an anthology, it is not a selection of the best, for it lacks the discrimination and good taste which is the essence of selection, and for the want of which no amount of industry can atone. The child-poems of our literature have still to be edited.

A POLITICIAN'S POETRY

ALTHOUGH it is against etiquette to quote Greek in Parliament, Homer has always been a great favourite with our statesmen and, indeed, may be said to be almost a factor in our political life. For as the cross-benches form a refuge for those who have no minds to make up, so those who cannot make up their minds always take to Homeric studies. Many of our leaders have sulked in their tents with Achilles after some violent political crisis and, enraged at the fickleness of fortune, more than one has given up to poetry what was obviously meant for party. It would be unjust, however, to regard Lord Carnarvon's translation of the *Odyssey* as being in any sense a political manifesto. Between Calypso and the colonies there is no connection, and the search for Penelope has nothing to do with the search for a policy. The love of literature alone has produced this version of the marvellous Greek epic, and to the love of literature alone it appeals. As Lord Carnarvon says very

truly in his preface, each generation in turn delights to tell the story of Odysseus in its own language, for the story is one that never grows old.

Of the labours of his predecessors in translation Lord Carnarvon makes ample recognition, though we acknowledge that we do not consider Pope's *Homer* 'the work of a great poet,' and we must protest that there is more in Chapman than 'quaint Elizabethan conceits.' The metre he has selected is blank verse, which he regards as the best compromise between 'the inevitable redundancy of rhyme and the stricter accuracy of prose.' This choice is, on the whole, a sensible one. Blank verse undoubtedly gives the possibility of a clear and simple rendering of the original. Upon the other hand, though we may get Homer's meaning, we often miss his music. The ten-syllabled line brings but a faint echo of the long roll of the Homeric hexameter, its rapid movement and continuous harmony. Besides, except in the hands of a great master of song, blank verse is apt to be tedious, and Lord Carnarvon's use of the weak ending, his habit of closing the line with an unimportant word, is hardly consistent with the stateliness of an epic, however valuable it might be in dramatic verse. Now and then, also, Lord Carnarvon exaggerates the value of the Homeric adjective, and for one word in the Greek gives us a whole line in the English. The simple ἑσπέριος, for instance, is converted into 'And when the shades of even-

ing fall around,' in the second book, and elsewhere purely decorative epithets are expanded into elaborate descriptions. However, there are many pleasing qualities in Lord Carnarvon's verse, and though it may not contain much subtlety of melody, still it has often a charm and sweetness of its own.

The description of Calypso's garden, for example, is excellent:

> Around the grotto grew a goodly grove,
> Alder, and poplar, and the cypress sweet;
> And the deep-winged sea-birds found their haunt,
> And owls and hawks, and long-tongued cormorants,
> Who joy to live upon the briny flood.
> And o'er the face of the deep cave a vine
> Wove its wild tangles and clustering grapes.
> Four fountains too, each from the other turned,
> Poured their white waters, whilst the grassy meads
> Bloomed with the parsley and the violet's flower.

The story of the Cyclops is not very well told. The grotesque humour of the Giant's promise hardly appears in

> Thee then, Noman, last of all
> Will I devour, and this thy gift shall be,

and the bitter play on words Odysseus makes, the pun on μῆτις, in fact, is not noticed. The idyll of Nausicaa, however, is very gracefully translated, and there is a great deal that is delightful in the Circe episode. For simplicity of diction this is also very good:

So to Olympus through the woody isle
Hermes departed, and I went my way
To Circe's halls, sore troubled in my mind.
But by the fair-tressed Goddess' gate I stood,
And called upon her, and she heard my voice,
And forth she came and oped the shining doors
And bade me in; and sad at heart I went.
Then did she set me on a stately chair,
Studded with silver nails of cunning work,
With footstool for my feet, and mixed a draught
Of her foul witcheries in golden cup,
For evil was her purpose. From her hand
I took the cup and drained it to the dregs,
Nor felt the magic charm; but with her rod
She smote me, and she said, 'Go, get thee hence
And herd thee with thy fellows in the stye.'
So spake she, and straightway I drew my sword
Upon the witch, and threatened her with death.

Lord Carnarvon, on the whole, has given us a very pleasing version of the first half of the *Odyssey*. His translation is done in a scholarly and careful manner and deserves much praise. It is not quite Homer, of course, but no translation can hope to be that, for no work of art can afford to lose its style or to give up the manner that is essential to it. Still, those who cannot read Greek will find much beauty in it, and those who can will often gain a charming reminiscence.

THE MOODS OF A MAN OF LETTERS

THIS is undoubtedly an interesting book, not merely through its eloquence and earnestness, but also through the wonderful catholicity of taste that it displays. Mr. Noel has a passion for panegyric. His eulogy on Keats is closely followed by a eulogy on Whitman, and his praise of Lord Tennyson is equalled only by his praise of Mr. Robert Buchanan. Sometimes, we admit, we would like a little more fineness of discrimination, a little more delicacy of perception. Sincerity of utterance is valuable in a critic, but sanity of judgment is more valuable still, and Mr. Noel's judgments are not always distinguished by their sobriety. Many of the essays, however, are well worth reading. The best is certainly that on *The Poetic Interpretation of Nature*, in which Mr. Noel claims that what is called by Mr. Ruskin the 'pathetic fallacy of literature' is in reality a vital emotional truth; but the essays on Hugo and Mr. Browning are good also; the

little paper entitled *Rambles by the Cornish Seas* is a real marvel of delightful description, and the monograph on Chatterton has a good deal of merit, though we must protest very strongly against Mr. Noel's idea that Chatterton must be modernised before he can be appreciated. Mr. Noel has absolutely no right whatsoever to alter Chatterton's 'yonge damoyselles' and '*anlace* fell' into 'youthful damsels' and '*weapon* fell,' for Chatterton's archaisms were an essential part of his inspiration and his method. Mr. Noel in one of his essays speaks with much severity of those who prefer sound to sense in poetry and, no doubt, this is a very wicked thing to do; but he himself is guilty of a much graver sin against art when, in his desire to emphasise the meaning of Chatterton, he destroys Chatterton's music. In the modernised version he gives of the wonderful *Songe to Ælla*, he mars by his corrections the poem's metrical beauty, ruins the rhymes and robs the music of its echo. Nineteenth-century restorations have done quite enough harm to English architecture without English poetry being treated in the same manner, and we hope that when Mr. Noel writes again about Chatterton he will quote from the poet's verse, not from a publisher's version.

This, however, is not by any means the chief blot on Mr. Noel's book. The fault of his book is that it tells us far more about his own personal feelings than it does about the qualities of the various works of art that are criticised. It is in

fact a diary of the emotions suggested by literature, rather than any real addition to literary criticism, and we fancy that many of the poets about whom he writes so eloquently would be not a little surprised at the qualities he finds in their work. Byron, for instance, who spoke with such contempt of what he called 'twaddling about trees and babbling o' green fields'; Byron who cried, 'Away with this cant about nature! A good poet can imbue a pack of cards with more poetry than inhabits the forests of America,' is claimed by Mr. Noel as a true nature-worshipper and Pantheist along with Wordsworth and Shelley; and we wonder what Keats would have thought of a critic who gravely suggests that *Endymion* is 'a parable of the development of the individual soul.' There are two ways of misunderstanding a poem. One is to misunderstand it and the other to praise it for qualities that it does not possess. The latter is Mr. Noel's method, and in his anxiety to glorify the artist he often does so at the expense of the work of art.

Mr. Noel also is constantly the victim of his own eloquence. So facile is his style that it constantly betrays him into crude and extravagant statements. Rhetoric and over-emphasis are the dangers that Mr. Noel has not always succeeded in avoiding. It is extravagant, for instance, to say that all great poetry has been 'pictorial,' or that Coleridge's *Knight's Grave* is worth many *Kubla Khans*, or that Byron has 'the splendid imperfection of an Æschylus,' or

that we had lately 'one dramatist living in England, and only one, who could be compared to Hugo, and that was Richard Hengist Horne,' and that 'to find an English dramatist of the same order before him we must go back to Sheridan if not to Otway.' Mr. Noel, again, has a curious habit of classing together the most incongruous names and comparing the most incongruous works of art. What is gained by telling us that 'Sardanapalus' is perhaps hardly equal to 'Sheridan,' that Lord Tennyson's ballad of *The Revenge* and his *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* are worthy of a place beside Thompson's *Rule Britannia*, that Edgar Allan Poe, Disraeli and Mr. Alfred Austin are artists of note whom we may affiliate on Byron, and that if Sappho and Milton 'had not high genius, they would be justly reproached as sensational'? And surely it is a crude judgment that classes Baudelaire, of all poets, with Marini and mediæval troubadours, and a crude style that writes of 'Goethe, Shelley, Scott, and Wilson,' for a mortal should not thus intrude upon the immortals, even though he be guilty of holding with them that *Cain* is 'one of the finest poems in the English language.' It is only fair, however, to add that Mr. Noel subsequently makes more than ample amends for having opened Parnassus to the public in this reckless manner, by calling Wilson an 'offal-feeder,' on the ground that he once wrote a severe criticism of some of Lord Tennyson's early poems. For Mr. Noel

does not mince his words. On the contrary, he speaks with much scorn of all euphuism and delicacy of expression and, preferring the affectation of nature to the affectation of art, he thinks nothing of calling other people 'Laura Bridgmans,' 'Jackasses' and the like. This, we think, is to be regretted, especially in a writer so cultured as Mr. Noel. For, though indignation may make a great poet, bad temper always makes a poor critic.

On the whole, Mr. Noel's book has an emotional rather than an intellectual interest. It is simply a record of the moods of a man of letters, and its criticisms merely reveal the critic without illuminating what he would criticise for us. The best that we can say of it is that it is a Sentimental Journey through Literature, the worst that any one could say of it is that it has all the merits of such an expedition.

MINER AND MINOR POETS

THE conditions that precede artistic production are so constantly treated as qualities of the work of art itself that one sometimes is tempted to wish that all art were anonymous. Yet there are certain forms of art so individual in their utterance, so purely personal in their expression, that for a full appreciation of their style and manner some knowledge of the artist's life is necessary. To this class belongs Mr. Skipsey's *Carols from the Coal-Fields*, a volume of intense human interest and high literary merit, and we are consequently glad to see that Dr. Spence Watson has added a short biography of his friend to his friend's poems, for the life and the literature are too indissolubly wedded ever really to be separated. Joseph Skipsey, Dr. Watson tells us, was sent into the coal pits at Percy Main, near North Shields, when he was seven years of age. Young as he was he had to work from twelve to sixteen hours in the day, generally

in the pitch dark, and in the dreary winter months he saw the sun only upon Sundays. When he went to work he had learned the alphabet and to put words of two letters together, but he was really his own schoolmaster, and 'taught himself to write, for example, by copying the letters from printed bills or notices, when he could get a candle end,—his paper being the trap-door, which it was his duty to open and shut as the wagons passed through, and his pen a piece of chalk.' The first book he really read was the Bible, and not content with reading it, he learned by heart the chapters which specially pleased him. When sixteen years old he was presented with a copy of Lindley Murray's Grammar, by the aid of which he gained some knowledge of the structural rules of English. He had already become acquainted with *Paradise Lost*, and was another proof of Matthew Prior's axiom, 'Who often reads will sometimes want to write,' for he had begun to write verse when only 'a bonnie pit lad.' For more than forty years of his life he laboured in 'the coal-dark underground,' and is now the caretaker of a Board-school in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. As for the qualities of his poetry, they are its directness and its natural grace. He has an intellectual as well as a metrical affinity with Blake, and possesses something of Blake's marvellous power of making simple things seem strange to us, and strange things seem simple. How delightful, for instance, is this little poem:

'Get up!' the caller calls, 'Get up!'
And in the dead of night,
To win the bairns their bite and sup,
I rise a weary wight.

My ffannel dudden donn'd, thrice o'er
My birds are kiss'd, and then
I with a whistle shut the door
I may not ope again.

How exquisite and fanciful this stray lyric:

The wind comes from the west to-night;
So sweetly down the lane he bloweth
Upon my lips, with pure delight
From head to foot my body gloweth.

Where did the wind, the magic find
To charm me thus? say, heart that knoweth!
'Within a rose on which he blows
Before upon thy lips he bloweth!'

We admit that Mr. Skipsey's work is extremely unequal, but when it is at its best it is full of sweetness and strength; and though he has carefully studied the artistic capabilities of language, he never makes his form formal by over-polishing. Beauty with him seems to be an unconscious result rather than a conscious aim; his style has all the delicate charm of chance. We have already pointed out his affinity to Blake, but with Burns also he may be said to have a spiritual kinship, and in the songs of the Northumbrian miner we meet with something of the Ayrshire peasant's wild gaiety and mad humour. He gives himself up freely to his impressions, and there is a fine, careless rapture in his laughter.

The whole book deserves to be read, and much of it deserves to be loved. Mr. Skipsey can find music for every mood, whether he is dealing with the real experiences of the pitman or with the imaginative experiences of the poet, and his verse has a rich vitality about it. In these latter days of shallow rhymes it is pleasant to come across some one to whom poetry is a passion not a profession.

Mr. F. B. Doveton belongs to a different school. In his amazing versatility he reminds us of the gentleman who wrote the immortal handbills for Mrs. Jarley, for his subjects range from Dr. Carter Moffatt and the Ammoniaphone to Mr. Whiteley, Lady Bicyclists, and the Immortality of the Soul. His verses in praise of Zoedone are a fine example of didactic poetry, his elegy on the death of Jumbo is quite up to the level of the subject, and the stanza on a watering-place,

> Who of its merits can e'er think meanly?
> Scattering ozone to all the land!

are well worthy of a place in any shilling guide-book. Mr. Doveton divides his poems into grave and gay, but we like him least when he is amusing, for in his merriment there is but little melody, and he makes his muse grin through a horse-collar. When he is serious he is much better, and his descriptive poems show that he has completely mastered the most approved poetical phraseology. Our old friend Boreas is as 'burly' as ever, 'zephyrs' are consistently 'amorous,' and 'the

welkin rings' upon the smallest provocation; birds are 'the feathered host' or 'the sylvan throng,' the wind 'wantons o'er the lea,' 'vernal gales' murmur to 'crystal rills,' and Lemprière's Dictionary supplies the Latin names for the sun and the moon. Armed with these daring and novel expressions Mr. Doveton indulges in fierce moods of nature-worship, and botanises recklessly through the provinces. Now and then, however, we come across some pleasing passages. Mr. Doveton apparently is an enthusiastic fisherman and sings merrily of the 'enchanting grayling' and the 'crimson and gold trout' that rise to the crafty angler's 'feathered wile.' Still, we fear that he will never produce any real good work till he has made up his mind whether destiny intends him for a poet or for an advertising agent, and we venture to hope that should he ever publish another volume he will find some other rhyme to 'vision' than 'Elysian,' a dissonance that occurs five times in this well-meaning but tedious volume.

As for Mr. Ashby-Sterry, those who object to the nude in art should at once read his lays of *The Lazy Minstrel* and be converted, for over these poems the milliner, not the muse, presides, and the result is a little alarming. As the Chelsea sage investigated the philosophy of clothes, so Mr. Ashby-Sterry has set himself to discover the poetry of petticoats, and seems to find much consolation in the thought that, though art is long, skirts are worn short. He is the only ped-

lar who has climbed Parnassus since Autolycus sang of

> Lawn as white as driven snow,
> Cypress black as e'er was crow,

and his details are as amazing as his diminutives. He is capable of penning a canto to a crinoline, and has a pathetic monody on a mackintosh. He sings of pretty puckers and pliant pleats, and is eloquent on frills, frocks and chemisettes. The latest French fashions stir him to a fine frenzy, and the sight of a pair of Balmoral boots thrills him with absolute ecstasy. He writes rondels on ribbons, lyrics on linen and lace, and his most ambitious ode is addressed to a Tomboy in Trouserettes! Yet his verse is often dainty and delicate, and many of his poems are full of sweet and pretty conceits. Indeed, of the Thames at summer time he writes so charmingly, and with such felicitous grace of epithet, that we cannot but regret that he has chosen to make himself the Poet of Petticoats and the Troubadour of Trouserettes.

A POETIC CALENDAR

FROM THE WORKS OF ALFRED AUSTIN

MOST modern calendars mar the sweet simplicity of our lives by reminding us that each day that passes is the anniversary of some perfectly uninteresting event. Their compilers display a degraded passion for chronicling small beer, and rake out the dust-heap of history in an ardent search after rubbish. Mr. Walter Scott, however, has made a new departure and has published a calendar in which every day of the year is made beautiful for us by means of an elegant extract from the poems of Mr. Alfred Austin. This, undoubtedly, is a step in the right direction. It is true that such aphorisms as

> Graves are a *mother's dimples*
> When we complain,

or

> The primrose wears a constant smile,
> And captive takes the heart,

can hardly be said to belong to the very highest order of poetry, still, they are preferable, on the

whole, to the date of Hannah More's birth, or of the burning down of Exeter Change, or of the opening of the Great Exhibition; and though it would be dangerous to make calendars the basis of Culture, we should all be much improved if we began each day with a fine passage of English poetry. How far this desirable result can be attained by a use of the volume now before us is, perhaps, open to question, but it must be admitted that its anonymous compiler has done his work very conscientiously, nor will we quarrel with him for the fact that he constantly repeats the same quotation twice over. No doubt it was difficult to find in Mr. Austin's work three hundred and sixty-five different passages really worthy of insertion in an almanac, and, besides, our climate has so degenerated of late that there is no reason at all why a motto perfectly suitable for February should not be equally appropriate when August has set in with its usual severity. For the misprints there is less excuse. Even the most uninteresting poet cannot survive bad editing.

Prefixed to the Calendar is an introductory note from the pen of Mr. William Sharp, written in that involved and affected style which is Mr. Sharp's distinguishing characteristic, and displaying that intimate acquaintance with Sappho's lost poems which is the privilege only of those who are not acquainted with Greek literature. As a criticism it is not of much value, but as an advertisement it is quite excellent. Indeed,

Mr. Sharp hints mysteriously at secret political influence, and tells us that though Mr. Austin 'sings with Tityrus' yet he 'has conversed with Æneas,' which, we suppose, is a euphemistic method of alluding to the fact that Mr. Austin once lunched with Lord Beaconsfield. It is for the poet, however, not for the politician, that Mr. Sharp reserves his loftiest panegyric and, in his anxiety to smuggle the author of *Leszko the Bastard* and *Grandmother's Teaching* into the charmed circle of the Immortals, he leaves no adjective unturned, quoting and misquoting Mr. Austin with a recklessness that is absolutely fatal to the cause he pleads. For mediocre critics are usually safe in their generalities; it is in their reasons and examples that they come so lamentably to grief. When, for instance, Mr. Sharp tells us that lines with the 'natural magic' of Shakespeare, Keats and Coleridge are 'far from infrequent' in Mr. Austin's poems, all that we can say is that we have never come across any lines of the kind in Mr. Austin's published works, but it is difficult to help smiling when Mr. Sharp gravely calls upon us to note 'the illuminative significance' of such a commonplace verse as

> My manhood keeps the dew of morn,
> And what have I to give;
> Being right glad that I was born,
> And thankful that I live.

Nor do Mr. Sharp's constant misquotations really help him out of his difficulties. Such a line as

> A meadow ribbed with *drying* swathes of hay,

has at least the merit of being a simple, straightforward description of an ordinary scene in an English landscape, but not much can be said in favour of

A meadow ribbed with *dying* swathes of hay,

which is Mr. Sharp's own version, and one that he finds 'delightfully suggestive.' It is indeed suggestive, but only of that want of care that comes from want of taste.

On the whole, Mr. Sharp has attempted an impossible task. Mr. Austin is neither an Olympian nor a Titan, and all the puffing in Paternoster Row cannot set him on Parnassus.

His verse is devoid of all real rhythmical life; it may have the metre of poetry, but it has not often got its music, nor can there be any true delicacy in the ear that tolerates such rhymes as 'chord' and 'abroad.' Even the claim that Mr. Sharp puts forward for him, that his muse takes her impressions directly from nature and owes nothing to books, cannot be sustained for a moment. Wordsworth is a great poet, but bad echoes of Wordsworth are extremely depressing, and when Mr. Austin calls the cuckoo a

Voyaging voice

and tells us that

The stockdove *broods*
Low to itself,

we must really enter a protest against such silly plagiarisms.

Perhaps, however, we are treating Mr. Sharp too seriously. He admits himself that it was at the special request of the compiler of the Calendar that he wrote the preface at all, and though he courteously adds that the task is agreeable to him, still he shows only too clearly that he considers it a task and, like a clever lawyer or a popular clergyman, tries to atone for his lack of sincerity by a pleasing over-emphasis. Nor is there any reason why this Calendar should not be a great success. If published as a broad-sheet, with a picture of Mr. Austin 'conversing with Æneas,' it might gladden many a simple cottage home and prove a source of innocent amusement to the Conservative working-man.

THE ODYSSEY OF HOMER

TRANSLATED BY WILLIAM MORRIS

OF all our modern poets, Mr. William Morris is the one best qualified by nature and by art to translate for us the marvellous epic of the wanderings of Odysseus. For he is our only true story-singer since Chaucer; if he is a Socialist, he is also a Saga-man; and there was a time when he was never wearied of telling us strange legends of gods and men, wonderful tales of chivalry and romance. Master as he is of decorative and descriptive verse, he has all the Greek's joy in the visible aspect of things, all the Greek's sense of delicate and delightful detail, all the Greek's pleasure in beautiful textures and exquisite materials and imaginative designs; nor can any one have a keener sympathy with the Homeric admiration for the workers and the craftsmen in the various arts, from the stainers in white ivory and the embroiderers in purple and gold, to the weaver sitting by the loom and the dyer dipping in the vat, the chaser of shield and helmet, the carver of wood or stone. And to all this is added the

true temper of high romance, the power to make the past as real to us as the present, the subtle instinct to discern passion, the swift impulse to portray life.

It is no wonder the lovers of Greek literature have so eagerly looked forward to Mr. Morris's version of the Odyssean epic, and now that the first volume has appeared, it is not extravagant to say that of all our English translations this is the most perfect and the most satisfying. In spite of Coleridge's well-known views on the subject, we have always held that Chapman's *Odyssey* is immeasurably inferior to his *Iliad*, the mere difference of metre alone being sufficient to set the former in a secondary place; Pope's *Odyssey*, with its glittering rhetoric and smart antithesis, has nothing of the grand manner of the original; Cowper is dull, and Bryant dreadful, and Worsley too full of Spenserian prettinesses; while excellent though Messrs. Butcher and Lang's version undoubtedly is in many respects, still, on the whole, it gives us merely the facts of the *Odyssey* without providing anything of its artistic effect. Avia's translation even, though better than almost all its predecessors in the same field, is not worthy of taking rank beside Mr. Morris's, for here we have a true work of art, a rendering not merely of language into language, but of poetry into poetry, and though the new spirit added in the transfusion may seem to many rather Norse than Greek, and, perhaps at times, more boisterous than beautiful, there is yet a

vigour of life in every line, a splendid ardour through each canto, that stirs the blood while one reads like the sound of a trumpet, and that, producing a physical as well as a spiritual delight, exults the senses no less than it exalts the soul. It may be admitted at once that, here and there, Mr. Morris has missed something of the marvellous dignity of the Homeric verse, and that, in his desire for rushing and ringing metre, he has occasionally sacrificed majesty to movement, and made stateliness give place to speed; but it is really only in such blank verse as Milton's that this effect of calm and lofty music can be attained, and in all other respects blank verse is the most inadequate medium for reproducing the full flow and fervour of the Greek's hexameter. One merit, at any rate, Mr. Morris's version entirely and absolutely possesses. It is, in no sense of the word, literary; it seems to deal immediately with life itself, and to take from the reality of things its own form and colour; it is always direct and simple, and at its best has something of the 'large utterance of the early gods.'

As for individual passages of beauty, nothing could be better than the wonderful description of the house of the Phœacian king, or the whole telling of the lovely legend of Circe, or the manner in which the pageant of the pale phantoms in Hades is brought before our eyes. Perhaps the huge epic humour of the escape from the Cyclops is hardly realised, but there is always a linguistic difficulty about rendering this fascinating story

into English, and where we are given so much poetry we should not complain about losing a pun; and the exquisite idyll of the meeting and parting with the daughter of Alcinous is really delightfully told. How good, for instance, is this passage taken at random from the Sixth Book:

But therewith unto the handmaids goodly Odysseus spake:
'Stand off I bid you, damsels, while the work in hand I take,
And wash the brine from my shoulders, and sleek them all around
Since verily now this long while sweet oil they have not found.
But before you nought will I wash me, for shame I have indeed,
Amidst of fair-tressed damsels to be all bare of weed.'
So he spake and aloof they gat them, and thereof they told the may,
But Odysseus with the river from his body washed away
The brine from his back and his shoulders wrought broad and mightily,
And from his head was he wiping the foam of the untilled sea;
But when he had throughly washed him, and the oil about him had shed
He did upon the raiment the gift of the maid unwed.
But Athene, Zeus-begotten, dealt with him in such wise
That bigger yet was his seeming, and mightier to all eyes,
With the hair on his head crisp curling as the bloom of the daffodil.
And as when the silver with gold is o'erlaid by a man of skill,
Yea, a craftsman whom Hephæstus and Pallas Athene have taught
To be master over masters and lovely work he hath wrought;
So she round his head and his shoulders shed grace abundantly.

It may be objected by some that the line

> With the hair on his head crisp curling as the bloom of the daffodil,

is a rather fanciful version of

οὖλας ἧκε κόμας, ὑακινθίνῳ ἄνθει ὁμοίας,

and it certainly seems probable that the allusion is to the dark colour of the hero's hair; still, the point is not one of much importance, though it may be worth noting that a similar expression occurs in Ogilby's superbly illustrated translation of the *Odyssey*, published in 1665, where Charles II.'s Master of the Revels in Ireland gives the passage thus:

> Minerva renders him more tall and fair,
> Curling in rings like daffodils his hair.

No anthology, however, can show the true merit of Mr. Morris's translation, whose real merit does not depend on stray beauties, nor is revealed by chance selections, but lies in the absolute rightness and coherence of the whole, in its purity and justice of touch, its freedom from affectation and commonplace, its harmony of form and matter. It is sufficient to say that this is a poet's version of a poet, and for such surely we should be thankful. In these latter days of coarse and vulgar literature, it is something to have made the great sea-epic of the South native and natural to our northern isle, something to have shown that our English speech may be a pipe through

which Greek lips can blow, something to have taught Nausicaa to speak the same language as Perdita.

Mr. Morris's second volume brings the great romantic epic of Greek literature to its perfect conclusion, and although there can never be an ultimate translation of either *Iliad* or *Odyssey*, as each successive age is sure to find pleasure in rendering the two poems in its own manner and according to its own canons of taste, still it is not too much to say that Mr. Morris's version will always be a true classic amongst our classical translations. It is not, of course, flawless. In our notice of the first volume we ventured to say that Mr. Morris was sometimes far more Norse than Greek, nor does the volume that now lies before us make us alter that opinion. The particular metre, also, selected by Mr. Morris, although admirably adapted to express 'the strong-winged music of Homer,' as far as its flow and freedom are concerned, misses something of its dignity and calm. Here, it must be admitted, we feel a distinct loss, for there is in Homer not a little of Milton's lofty manner, and if swiftness be an essential of the Greek hexameter, stateliness is one of its distinguishing qualities in Homer's hands. This defect, however, if we must call it a defect, seems almost unavoidable, as for certain metrical reasons a majestic movement in English verse is necessarily a slow movement; and, after all that can be said is said, how really admirable is this whole translation! If we set aside its noble

qualities as a poem and look on it purely from the scholar's point of view, how straightforward it is, how honest and direct! Its fidelity to the original is far beyond that of any other verse-translation in our literature, and yet it is not the fidelity of a pedant to his text but rather the fine loyalty of poet to poet.

When Mr. Morris's first volume appeared many of the critics complained that his occasional use of archaic words and unusual expressions robbed his version of the true Homeric simplicity. This, however, is not a very felicitous criticism, for while Homer is undoubtedly simple in his clearness and largeness of vision, his wonderful power of direct narration, his wholesome sanity, and the purity and precision of his method, simple in language he undoubtedly is not. What he was to his contemporaries we have, of course, no means of judging, but we know that the Athenian of the fifth century B.C. found him in many places difficult to understand, and when the creative age was succeeded by the age of criticism and Alexandria began to take the place of Athens as the centre of culture for the Hellenistic world, Homeric dictionaries and glossaries seem to have been constantly published. Indeed, Athenæus tells us of a wonderful Byzantine blue-stocking, a *précieuse* from the Propontis, who wrote a long hexameter poem, called *Mnemosyne*, full of ingenious commentaries on difficulties in Homer, and in fact, it is evident that, as far as the language is concerned, such a phrase as 'Homeric simplicity'

would have rather amazed an ancient Greek. As for Mr. Morris's tendency to emphasise the etymological meaning of words, a point commented on with somewhat flippant severity in a recent number of *Macmillan's Magazine*, here Mr. Morris seems to us to be in complete accord, not merely with the spirit of Homer, but with the spirit of all early poetry. It is quite true that language is apt to degenerate into a system of almost algebraic symbols, and the modern city-man who takes a ticket for Blackfriars Bridge, naturally never thinks of the Dominican monks who once had their monastery by Thames-side, and after whom the spot is named. But in earlier times it was not so. Men were then keenly conscious of the real meaning of words, and early poetry, especially, is full of this feeling, and, indeed, may be said to owe to it no small portion of its poetic power and charm. These old words, then, and this old use of words which we find in Mr. Morris's *Odyssey* can be amply justified upon historical grounds, and as for their artistic effect, it is quite excellent. Pope tried to put Homer into the ordinary language of his day, with what result we know only too well; but Mr. Morris, who uses his archaisms with the tact of a true artist, and to whom indeed they seem to come absolutely naturally, has succeeded in giving to his version by their aid that touch, not of 'quaintness,' for Homer is never quaint, but of old-world romance and old-world beauty, which we moderns find so pleasurable, and to

which the Greeks themselves were so keenly sensitive.

As for individual passages of special merit, Mr. Morris's translation is no robe of rags sewn with purple patches for critics to sample. Its real value lies in the absolute rightness and coherence of the whole, in the grand architecture of the swift, strong verse, and in the fact that the standard is not merely high but everywhere sustained. It is impossible, however, to resist the temptation of quoting Mr. Morris's rendering of that famous passage in the twenty-third book of the epic, in which Odysseus eludes the trap laid for him by Penelope, whose very faith in the certainty of her husband's return makes her sceptical of his identity when he stands before her; an instance, by the way, of Homer's wonderful psychological knowledge of human nature, as it is always the dreamer himself who is most surprised when his dream comes true:

Thus she spake to prove her husband; but Odysseus, grieved at heart,
Spake thus unto his bed-mate well-skilled in gainful art:
'O woman, thou sayest a word exceeding grievous to me!
Who hath otherwhere shifted my bedstead? full hard for him should it be,
For as deft as he were, unless soothly a very God come here,
Who easily, if he willed it, might shift it otherwhere.
But no mortal man is living, how strong soe'er in his youth,
Who shall lightly hale it elsewhere, since a mighty wonder forsooth
Is wrought in that fashioned bedstead, and I wrought it. and I alone.

In the close grew a thicket of olive, a long-leaved tree full-grown,
That flourished and grew goodly as big as a pillar about,
So round it I built my bride-room, till I did the work right out
With ashlar stone close-fitting: and I roofed it overhead,
And thereto joined doors I made me, well-fitting in their stead.
Then I lopped away the boughs of the long-leafed olive-tree,
And, shearing the bole from the root up full well and cunningly,
I planed it about with the brass, and set the rule thereto,
And shaping thereof a bed-post, with the wimble I bored it through.
So beginning, I wrought out the bedstead, and finished it utterly,
And with gold enwrought it about, and with silver and ivory,
And stretched on it a thong of oxhide with the purple dye made bright.
Thus then the sign I have shown thee; nor, woman, know I aright
If my bed yet bideth steadfast, or if to another place
Some man hath moved it, and smitten the olive-bole from its base.'

These last twelve books of the *Odyssey* have not the same marvel of romance, adventure and colour that we find in the earlier part of the epic. There is nothing in them that we can compare to the exquisite idyll of Nausicaa or to the Titanic humour of the episode in the Cyclops' cave. Penelope has not the glamour of Circe, and the song of the Sirens may sound sweeter than the whizz of the arrows of Odysseus as he stands on the

threshold of his hall. Yet, for sheer intensity of passionate power, for concentration of intellectual interest and for masterly dramatic construction, these latter books are quite unequalled. Indeed, they show very clearly how it was that, as Greek art developed, the epos passed into the drama. The whole scheme of the argument, the return of the hero in disguise, his disclosure of himself to his son, his terrible vengeance on his enemies and his final recognition by his wife, reminds us of the plot of more than one Greek play, and shows us what the great Athenian poet meant when he said that his own dramas were merely scraps from Homer's table. In rendering this splendid poem into English verse, Mr. Morris has done our literature a service that can hardly be over-estimated, and it is pleasant to think that, even should the classics be entirely excluded from our educational systems, the English boy will still be able to know something of Homer's delightful tales, to catch an echo of his grand music and to wander with the wise Odysseus round 'the shores of old romance.'

A SCOTCHMAN ON SCOTTISH POETRY

A DISTINGUISHED living critic, born south of the Tweed, once whispered in confidence to a friend that he believed that the Scotch knew really very little about their own national literature. He quite admitted that they love their 'Robbie Burns' and their 'Sir Walter' with a patriotic enthusiasm that makes them extremely severe upon any unfortunate southron who ventures to praise either in their presence, but he claimed that the works of such great national poets as Dunbar, Henryson and Sir David Lyndsay are sealed books to the majority of the reading public in Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Glasgow, and that few Scotch people have any idea of the wonderful outburst of poetry that took place in their country during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, at a time when there was little corresponding development in England. Whether this terrible accusation be absolutely true, or not, it is needless to discuss at present. It is probable

that the archaism of language alone will always prevent a poet like Dunbar from being popular in the ordinary acceptation of the word. Professor Veitch's book, however, shows that there are some, at any rate, in the 'land o' cakes' who can admire and appreciate their marvellous early singers, and whose admiration for *The Lord of the Isles* and the verses *To a Mountain Daisy* does not blind them to the exquisite beauties of *The Testament of Cresseid*, *The Thistle and the Rose*, and the *Dialog betwix Experience and ane Courteour*.

Taking as the subject of his two interesting volumes the feeling for Nature in Scottish Poetry, Professor Veitch starts with a historical disquisition on the growth of the sentiment in humanity. The primitive state he regards as being simply a sort of 'open-air feeling.' The chief sources of pleasure are the warmth of the sunshine, the cool of the breeze and the general fresh aspect of the earth and sky, connecting itself with a consciousness of life and sensuous enjoyment; while darkness, storm and cold are regarded as repulsive. This is followed by the pastoral stage in which we find the love of green meadows and of shady trees and of all things that make life pleasant and comfortable. This, again, by the stage of agriculture, the era of the war with earth, when men take pleasure in the cornfield and in the garden, but hate everything that is opposed to tillage, such as woodland and rock, or that cannot be subdued to utility, such as mountain

and sea. Finally we come to the pure nature-feeling, the free delight in the mere contemplation of the external world, the joy in sense-impressions irrespective of all questions of Nature's utility and beneficence. But here the growth does not stop. The Greek, desiring to make Nature one with humanity, peopled the grove and hillside with beautiful and fantastic forms, saw the god hiding in the thicket, and the naiad drifting with the stream. The modern Wordsworthian, desiring to make man one with Nature, finds in external things 'the symbols of our inner life, the workings of a spirit akin to our own.' There is much that is suggestive in these early chapters of Professor Veitch's book, but we cannot agree with him in the view he takes of the primitive attitude towards Nature. The 'open-air feeling,' of which he talks, seems to us comparatively modern. The earliest Nature-myths tell us, not of man's 'sensuous enjoyment' of Nature, but of the terror that Nature inspires. Nor are darkness and storm regarded by the primitive man as 'simply repulsive'; they are to him divine and supernatural things, full of wonder and full of awe. Some reference, also, should have been made to the influence of towns on the development of the nature-feeling, for, paradox though it may seem, it is none the less true that it is largely to the creation of cities that we owe the love of the country.

Professor Veitch is on a safer ground when he comes to deal with the growth and manifestations

of this feeling as displayed in Scotch poetry. The early singers, as he points out, had all the mediæval love of gardens, all the artistic delight in the bright colours of flowers and the pleasant song of birds, but they felt no sympathy for the wild solitary moorland, with its purple heather, its grey rocks and its waving bracken. Montgomerie was the first to wander out on the banks and braes and to listen to the music of the burns, and it was reserved for Drummond of Hawthornden to sing of flood and forest and to notice the beauty of the mists on the hillside and the snow on the mountain tops. Then came Allan Ramsay with his honest homely pastorals; Thomson, who writes about Nature like an eloquent auctioneer, and yet was a keen observer, with a fresh eye and an open heart; Beattie, who approached the problems that Wordsworth afterwards solved; the great Celtic epic of Ossian, such an important factor in the romantic movement of Germany and France; Fergusson, to whom Burns is so much ndebted; Burns himself, Leyden, Sir Walter Scott, James Hogg and (*longo intervallo*) Christopher North and the late Professor Shairp. On nearly all these poets Professor Veitch writes with fine judgment and delicate feeling, and even his admiration for Burns has nothing absolutely aggressive about it. He shows, however, a certain lack of the true sense of literary proportion in the amount of space he devotes to the two last writers on our list. Christopher North was undoubtedly an interesting personality to the Edin-

burgh of his day, but he has not left behind him anything of real permanent value. There was too much noise in his criticism, too little music in his poetry. As for Professor Shairp, looked on as a critic he was a tragic example of the unfortunate influence of Wordsworth, for he was always confusing ethical with æsthetical questions, and never had the slightest idea how to approach such poets as Shelley and Rossetti whom it was his mission to interpret to young Oxford in his later years;* while, considered as a poet, he deserves hardly more than a passing reference. Professor Veitch gravely tells us that one of the descriptions of *Kilmahoe* is 'not surpassed in the language for real presence, felicity of epithet, and purity of reproduction,' and statements of this kind serve to remind us of the fact that a criticism which is based on patriotism is always provincial in its result. But it is only fair to add that it is very rarely that Professor Veitch is so extravagant and so grotesque. His judgment and taste are, as a rule, excellent, and his book is, on the whole, a very fascinating and delightful contribution to the history of literature.

*Shairp was Professor of Poetry at Oxford in Wilde's undergraduate days.

WOMEN'S VOICES

WOMEN'S VOICES is an anthology of the most characteristic poems by English, Scotch and Irish women, selected and arranged by Mrs. William Sharp. 'The idea of making this anthology,' says Mrs. Sharp, in her preface, 'arose primarily from the conviction that our women-poets had never been collectively represented with anything like adequate justice; that the works of many are not so widely known as they deserve to be; and that at least some fine fugitive poetry could be thus rescued from oblivion'; and Mrs. Sharp proceeds to claim that the 'selections will further emphasise the value of women's work in poetry for those who are already well acquainted with English Literature, and that they will convince many it is as possible to form an anthology of "pure poetry" from the writings of women as from those of men.' It is somewhat difficult to define what 'pure poetry' really is, but the collection is certainly extremely interesting, extending, as it does, over nearly three centuries of

our literature. It opens with *Revenge*, a poem by the 'learned, virtuous, and truly noble Ladie,' Elizabeth Carew, who published a *Tragedie of Marian, the faire Queene of Iewry*, in 1613, from which *Revenge* is taken. Then come some very pretty verses by Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle, who produced a volume of poems in 1653. They are supposed to be sung by a sea-goddess, and their fantastic charm and the graceful wilfulness of their fancy are well worthy of note, as these first stanzas show:

> My cabinets are oyster-shells,
> In which I keep my Orient pearls;
> And modest coral I do wear,
> Which blushes when it touches air.
>
> On silvery waves I sit and sing,
> And then the fish lie listening:
> Then resting on a rocky stone
> I comb my hair with fishes' bone;
>
> The whilst Apollo with his beams
> Doth dry my hair from soaking streams,
> His light doth glaze the water's face,
> And make the sea my looking-glass.

Then follow *Friendship's Mystery*, by 'The Matchless Orinda,' Mrs. Katherine Philips; *A Song*, by Mrs. Aphra Behn, 'the first English woman who adopted literature as a profession'; and the Countess of Winchelsea's *Nocturnal Reverie*. Wordsworth once said that, with the exception of this poem and Pope's *Windsor Forest*, 'the poetry of the period intervening between *Paradise Lost* and *The Seasons* does not contain a single

new image of external nature,' and though the statement is hardly accurate, as it leaves Gay entirely out of account, it must be admitted that the simple naturalism of Lady Winchelsea's description is extremely remarkable. Passing on through Mrs. Sharp's collection, we come across poems by Lady Grisell Baillie; by Jéan Adams, a poor 'sewing-maid in a Scotch manse,' who died in the Greenock Workhouse; by Isobel Pagan, 'an Ayrshire lucky, who kept an ale-house, and sold whiskey without a license,' 'and sang her own songs as a means of subsistence'; by Mrs. Thrale, Dr. Johnson's friend; by Mrs. Hunter, the wife of the great anatomist; by the worthy Mrs. Barbauld; and by the excellent Mrs. Hannah More. Here is Miss Anna Seward, 'called by her admirers "the Swan of Litchfield," ' who was so angry with Dr. Darwin for plagiarising some of her verses; Lady Anne Barnard, whose *Auld Robin Gray* was described by Sir Walter Scott as 'worth all the dialogues Corydon and Phyllis have together spoken from the days of Theocritus downwards'; Jean Glover, a Scottish weaver's daughter, who 'married a strolling player and became the best singer and actor of his troop'; Joanna Baillie, whose tedious dramas thrilled our grandfathers; Mrs. Tighe, whose *Psyche* was very much admired by Keats in his youthful days; Frances Kemble, Mrs. Siddons's niece; poor L. E. L., whom Disraeli described as 'the personification of Brompton, pink satin dress, white satin shoes, red cheeks, snub nose,

and her hair *à la* Sappho'; the two beautiful sisters, Lady Dufferin and Mrs. Norton; Emily Brontë, whose poems are instinct with tragic power and quite terrible in their bitter intensity of passion, the fierce fire of feeling seeming almost to consume the raiment of form; Eliza Cook, a kindly, vulgar writer; George Eliot, whose poetry is too abstract, and lacks all rhythmical life; Mrs. Carlyle, who wrote much better poetry than her husband, though this is hardly high praise; and Mrs. Browning, the first really great poetess in our literature. Nor are contemporary writers forgotten. Christina Rossetti, some of whose poems are quite priceless in their beauty; Mrs. Augusta Webster, Mrs. Hamilton King, Miss Mary Robinson, Mrs. Craik; Jean Ingelow, whose sonnet on *An Ancient Chess King* is like an exquisitely carved gem; Mrs. Pfeiffer; Miss May Probyn, a poetess with the true lyrical impulse of song, whose work is as delicate as it is delightful; Mrs. Nesbit, a very pure and perfect artist; Miss Rosa Mulholland, Miss Katherine Tynan, Lady Charlotte Elliot, and many other well-known writers, are duly and adequately represented. On the whole, Mrs. Sharp's collection is very pleasant reading indeed, and the extracts given from the works of living poetesses are extremely remarkable, not merely for their absolute artistic excellence, but also for the light they throw upon the spirit of modern culture.

It is not, however, by any means a complete anthology. Dame Juliana Berners is possibly

too antiquated in style to be suitable to a modern audience. But where is Anne Askew, who wrote a ballad in Newgate; and where is Queen Elizabeth, whose 'most sweet and sententious ditty' on Mary Stuart is so highly praised by Puttenham as an example of 'Exargasia,' or The Gorgeous in Literature? Why is the Countess of Pembroke excluded? Sidney's sister should surely have a place in any anthology of English verse. Where is Sidney's niece, Lady Mary Wroth, to whom Ben Jonson dedicated *The Alchemist?* Where is 'the noble ladie Diana Primrose,' who wrote *A Chain of Pearl, or a memorial of the peerless graces and heroic virtues of Queen Elizabeth, of glorious memory?* Where is Mary Morpeth, the friend and admirer of Drummond of Hawthornden? Where is the Princess Elizabeth, daughter of James I., and where is Anne Killigrew, maid of honour to the Duchess of York? The Marchioness of Wharton, whose poems were praised by Waller; Lady Chudleigh, whose lines beginning—

> Wife and servant are the same,
> But only differ in the name,

are very curious and interesting; Rachel Lady Russell, Constantia Grierson, Mary Barber, Lætitia Pilkington; Eliza Haywood, whom Pope honoured by a place in *The Dunciad;* Lady Luxborough, Lord Bolingbroke's half-sister; Lady Mary Wortley Montagu; Lady Temple, whose poems were printed by Horace Walpole; Per-

dita, whose lines on the snowdrop are very pathetic; the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire, of whom Gibbon said that 'she was made for something better than a Duchess'; Mrs. Ratcliffe, Mrs. Chapone, and Amelia Opie, all deserve a place on historical, if not on artistic, grounds. In fact, the space given by Mrs. Sharp to modern and living poetesses is somewhat disproportionate, and I am sure that those on whose brows the laurels are still green would not grudge a little room to those the green of whose laurels is withered and the music of whose lyres is mute.

VIRGIL'S ECLOGUES AND ÆNEID

TRANSLATED BY SIR CHARLES BOWEN

SIR CHARLES BOWEN'S translation of the *Eclogues* and the first six books of the *Æneid* is hardly the work of a poet, but it is a very charming version for all that, combining as it does the fine loyalty and learning of a scholar with the graceful style of a man of letters, two essential qualifications for any one who would render in English verse the picturesque pastorals of Italian provincial life, or the stately and polished epic of Imperial Rome. Dryden was a true poet, but, for some reason or other, he failed to catch the real Virgilian spirit. His own qualities became defects when he accepted the task of a translator. He is too robust, too manly, too strong. He misses Virgil's strange and subtle sweetness and has but little of his exquisite melody. Professor Conington, on the other hand, was an admirable and painstaking scholar, but he was so entirely devoid of literary tact and artistic insight that he thought that the majesty of Virgil could be rendered in the jing-

ling manner of *Marmion*, and though there is certainly far more of the mediæval knight than of the moss-trooper about Æneas, even Mr. Morris's version is not by any means perfect. Compared with Professor Conington's bad ballad it is, of course, as gold to brass; considered simply as a poem it has noble and enduring qualities of beauty, music and strength; but it hardly conveys to us the sense that the *Æneid* is the literary epic of a literary age. There is more of Homer in it than of Virgil, and the ordinary reader would hardly realise from the flow and spirit of its swinging lines that Virgil was a self-conscious artist, the Laureate of a cultured Court. The *Æneid* bears almost the same relation to the *Iliad* that the *Idylls of the King* do to the old Celtic romances of Arthur. Like them it is full of felicitous modernisms, of exquisite literary echoes and of delicate and delightful pictures; as Lord Tennyson loves England so did Virgil love Rome; the pageants of history and the purple of empire are equally dear to both poets; but neither of them has the grand simplicity or the large humanity of the early singers, and, as a hero, Æneas is no less a failure than Arthur. Sir Charles Bowen's version hardly gives us this peculiar literary quality of Virgil's verse, and, now and then, it reminds us, by some awkward inversion, of the fact that it is a translation; still, on the whole, it is extremely pleasant to read, and, if it does not absolutely mirror Virgil, it at least brings us many charming memories of him.

The metre Sir Charles Bowen has selected is a form of English hexameter, with the final dissyllable shortened into a foot of a single syllable only. It is, of course, accentual not quantitative, and though it misses that element of sustained strength which is given by the dissyllabic ending of the Latin verse, and has consequently a tendency to fall into couplets, the increased facility of rhyming gained by the change is of no small value. To any English metre that aims at swiftness of movement rhyme seems to be an absolute essential, and there are not enough double rhymes in our language to admit of the retention of this final dissyllabic foot.

As an example of Sir Charles Bowen's method we would take his rendering of the famous passage in the fifth *Eclogue* on the death of Daphnis:

*

All of the nymphs went weeping for Daphnis cruelly slain:
Ye were witnesses, hazels and river waves, of the pain
When to her son's sad body the mother clave with a cry,
Calling the great gods cruel, and cruel the stars of the sky.
None upon those dark days their pastured oxen did lead,
Daphnis, to drink of the cold clear rivulet; never a steed
Tasted the flowing waters, or cropped one blade in the mead.
Over thy grave how the lions of Carthage roared in despair,
Daphnis, the echoes of mountain wild and of forest declare.
Daphnis was first who taught us to guide, with a chariot rein,
Far Armenia's tigers, the chorus of Iacchus to train,
Led us with foliage waving the pliant spear to entwine.
As to the tree her vine is a glory, her grapes to the vine,
Bull to the horned herd, and the corn to a fruitful plain,
Thou to thine own wert beauty; and since fate robbed us of thee,
Pales herself, and Apollo are gone from meadow and lea.

'Calling the great gods cruel, and cruel the stars of the sky' is a very felicitous rendering of 'Atque deos atque astra vocat crudelia mater,' and so is 'Thou to thine own wert beauty' for 'Tu decus omne tuis.' This passage, too, from the fourth book of the *Æneid* is good:

Now was the night. Tired limbs upon earth were folded to sleep,
Silent the forests and fierce sea-waves; in the firmament deep
Midway rolled heaven's stars; no sound on the meadow stirred;
Every beast of the field, each bright-hued feathery bird
Haunting the limpid lakes, or the tangled briary glade,
Under the silent night in sleep were peacefully laid:
All but the grieving Queen. She yields her never to rest,
Takes not the quiet night to her eyelids or wearied breast.

And this from the sixth book is worth quoting:

'Never again such hopes shall a youth of the lineage of Troy
Rouse in his great forefathers of Latium! Never a boy
Nobler pride shall inspire in the ancient Romulus land!
Ah, for his filial love! for his old-world faith! for his hand
Matchless in battle! Unharmed what foemen had offered to stand
Forth in his path, when charging on foot for the enemy's ranks
Or when plunging the spur in his foam-flecked courser's flanks!
Child of a nation's sorrow! if thou canst battle the Fates'
Bitter decrees, and break for a while their barrier gates,
Thine to become Marcellus! I pray thee bring me anon
Handfuls of lilies, that I bright flowers may strew on my son,
Heap on the shade of the boy unborn these gifts at the least,
Doing the dead, though vainly, the last sad service.'
He ceased.

'Thine to become Marcellus' has hardly the simple pathos of 'Tu Marcellus eris,' but 'Child of a nation's sorrow' is a graceful rendering of 'Heu, miserande puer.' Indeed, there is a great deal of feeling in the whole translation, and the tendency of the metre to run into couplets, of which we have spoken before, is corrected to a certain degree in the passage quoted above from the *Eclogues* by the occasional use of the triplet, as, elsewhere, by the introduction of alternate, not successive, rhymes.

Sir Charles Bowen is to be congratulated on the success of his version. It has both style and fidelity to recommend it. The metre he has chosen seems to us more suited to the sustained majesty of the *Æneid* than it is to the pastoral note of the *Eclogues*. It can bring us something of the strength of the lyre but has hardly caught the sweetness of the pipe. Still, it is in many points a very charming translation, and we gladly welcome it as a most valuable addition to the literature of echoes.

A MODERN APOSTLE

MISS CONSTANCE NADEN'S little volume, *A Modern Apostle and Other Poems*, shows both culture and courage—culture in its use of language, courage in its selection of subject-matter. The modern apostle of whom Miss Naden sings is a young clergyman who preaches Pantheistic Socialism in the Free Church of some provincial manufacturing town, converts everybody, except the woman whom he loves, and is killed in a street riot. The story is exceedingly powerful, but seems more suitable for prose than for verse. It is right that a poet should be full of the spirit of his age, but the external forms of modern life are hardly, as yet, expressive of that spirit. They are truths of fact, not truths of the imagination, and though they may give the poet an opportunity for realism, they often rob the poem of the reality that is so essential to it. Art, however, is a matter of result, not of theory, and if the fruit is pleasant, we should not quarrel about the tree. Miss Naden's work is distinguished by

rich imagery, fine colour, and sweet music, and these are things for which we should be grateful, wherever we find them. In point of mere technical skill, her longer poems are the best; but some of the shorter poems are very fascinating. This, for instance, is pretty:

> The copyist group was gathered round
> A time-worn fresco, world-renowned,
> Whose central glory once had been
> The face of Christ, the Nazarene.
>
> And every copyist of the crowd
> With his own soul that face endowed,
> Gentle, severe, majestic, mean;
> But which was Christ, the Nazarene?
>
> Then one who watched them made complaint,
> And marvelled, saying, 'Wherefore paint
> Till ye be sure your eyes have seen
> The face of Christ, the Nazarene?'

And this sonnet is full of suggestion:

> The wine-flushed monarch slept, but in his ear
> An angel breathed—'Repent, or choose the flame
> Quenchless.' In dread he woke, but not in shame,
> Deep musing—'Sin I love, yet hell I fear.'
>
> Wherefore he left his feasts and minions dear,
> And justly ruled, and died a saint in name.
> But when his hasting spirit heavenward came,
> A stern voice cried—'O Soûl! what dost thou here?
>
> 'Love I forswore, and wine, and kept my vow
> To live a just and joyless life, and now
> I crave reward.' The voice came like a knell—
> 'Fool! dost thou hope to find again thy mirth,
> And those foul joys thou didst renounce on earth?
> Yea, enter in! My heaven shall be thy hell.'

Miss Constance Naden deserves a high place among our living poetesses, and this, as Mrs. Sharp has shown lately in her volume, entitled *Women's Voices*,* is no mean distinction.

* See page 501.

THE NEW PURGATORY

THE NEW PURGATORY and Other Poems, by Miss E. R. Chapman, is, in some respects, a very remarkable little volume. It used to be said that women were too poetical by nature to make great poets, too receptive to be really creative, too well satisfied with mere feeling to search after the marble splendour of form. But we must not judge of woman's poetic power by her achievements in days when education was denied to her, for where there is no faculty of expression no art is possible. Mrs. Browning, the first great English poetess, was also an admirable scholar, though she may not have put the accents on her Greek, and even in those poems that seem most remote from classical life, such as *Aurora Leigh*, for instance, it is not difficult to trace the fine literary influence of a classical training. Since Mrs. Browning's time, education has become, not the privilege of a few women, but the in-

alienable inheritance of all; and, as a natural consequence of the increased faculty of expression thereby gained, the women poets of our day hold a very high literary position. Curiously enough, their poetry is, as a rule, more distinguished for strength than for beauty; they seem to love to grapple with the big intellectual problems of modern life; science, philosophy and metaphysics form a large portion of their ordinary subject-matter; they leave the triviality of triolets to men, and try to read the writing on the wall, and to solve the last secret of the Sphinx. Hence Robert Browning, not Keats, is their idol; *Sordello* moves them more than the *Ode on a Grecian Urn;* and all Lord Tennyson's magic and music seems to them as nothing compared with the psychological subtleties of *The Ring and the Book*, or the pregnant questions stirred in the dialogue between Blougram and Gigadibs. Indeed I remember hearing a charming young Girtonian, forgetting for a moment the exquisite lyrics in *Pippa Passes*, and the superb blank verse of *Men and Women*, state quite seriously that the reason she admired the author of *Red-Cotton Night-Cap Country* was that he had headed a reaction against beauty in poetry!

Miss Chapman is probably one of Mr. Browning's disciples. She does not imitate him, but it is easy to discern his influence on her verse, and she has caught something of his fine, strange faith. Take, for instance, her poem, *A Strong-minded Woman:*

See her? Oh, yes!—Come this way—hush! this way,
Here she is lying,
Sweet—with the smile her face wore yesterday,
As she lay dying.
Calm, the mind-fever gone, and, praise God! gone
All the heart-hunger;
Looking the merest girl at forty-one—
You guessed her younger?
Well, she'd the flower-bloom that children have,
Was lithe and pliant,
With eyes as innocent blue as they were brave,
Resolved, defiant.
Yourself—you worship art! Well, at that shrine
She too bowed lowly,
Drank thirstily of beauty, as of wine,
Proclaimed it holy.
But could you follow her when, in a breath,
She knelt to science,
Vowing to truth true service to the death,
And heart-reliance?
Nay,—then for you she underwent eclipse,
Appeared as alien
As once, before he prayed, those ivory lips
Seemed to Pygmalion.

. . . . . .

Hear from your heaven, my dear, my lost delight,
You who were woman
To your heart's heart, and not more pure, more white,
Than warmly human.
How shall I answer? How express, reveal
Your true life-story?
How utter, if they cannot guess—not feel
Your crowning glory?
This way. Attend my words. The rich, we know,
Do into heaven
Enter but hardly; to the poor, the low,
God's kingdom's given.

Well, there's another heaven—a heaven on earth—
(That's love's fruition)
Whereto a certain lack—a certain dearth—
Gains best admission.
Here, too, she was too rich—ah, God! if less
Love had been lent her!—
Into the realm of human happiness
These look—not enter.

Well, here we have, if not quite an echo, at least a reminiscence of the metre of *The Grammarian's Funeral;* and the peculiar blending together of lyrical and dramatic forms, seems essentially characteristic of Mr. Browning's method. Yet there is a distinct personal note running all through the poem, and true originality is to be found rather in the use made of a model than in the rejection of all models and masters. *Dans l'art comme dans la nature on est toujours fils de quelqu'un*, and we should not quarrel with the reed if it whispers to us the music of the lyre. A little child once asked me if it was the nightingale who taught the linnets how to sing.

Miss Chapman's other poems contain a great deal that is interesting. The most ambitious is *The New Purgatory*, to which the book owes its title. It is a vision of a strange garden in which, cleansed and purified of all stain and shame, walk Judas of Cherioth, Nero the Lord of Rome, Ysabel the wife of Ahab, and others, around whose names cling terrible memories of horror, or awful splendours of sin. The conception is fine, but the treatment is hardly adequate. There are, however, some good strong lines in it, and, indeed,

almost all of Miss Chapman's poems are worth reading, if not for their absolute beauty, at least for their intellectual intention.

SOME MODERN POETS

'IF I were king,' says Mr. Henley, in one of his most modest rondeaus,

> 'Art should aspire, yet ugliness be dear;
> Beauty, the shaft, should speed with wit for feather;
> And love, sweet love, should never fall to sere,
> If I were king.'

And these lines contain, if not the best criticism of his own work, certainly a very complete statement of his aim and motive as a poet. His little *Book of Verses* reveals to us an artist who is seeking to find new methods of expression and has not merely a delicate sense of beauty and a brilliant, fantastic wit, but a real passion also for what is horrible, ugly, or grotesque. No doubt, everything that is worthy of existence is worthy also of art—at least, one would like to think so——but while echo or mirror can repeat for us a beautiful thing, to render artistically a thing that is ugly requires the most exquisite alchemy of form, the most subtle magic of transformation.

To me there is more of the cry of Marsyas than of the singing of Apollo in the earlier poems of Mr. Henley's volume, *In Hospital: Rhymes and Rhythms*, as he calls them. But it is impossible to deny their power. Some of them are like bright, vivid pastels; others like charcoal drawings, with dull blacks and murky whites; others like etchings with deeply-bitten lines, and abrupt contrasts, and clever colour-suggestions. In fact, they are like anything and everything, except perfected poems—that they certainly are not. They are still in the twilight. They are preludes, experiments, inspired jottings in a note-book, and should be heralded by a design of 'Genius Making Sketches.' Rhyme gives architecture as well as melody to verse; it gives that delightful sense of limitation which in all the arts is so pleasurable, and is, indeed, one of the secrets of perfection; it will whisper, as a French critic has said, 'things unexpected and charming, things with strange and remote relations to each other,' and bind them together in indissoluble bonds of beauty; and in his constant rejection of rhyme, Mr. Henley seems to me to have abdicated half his power. He is a *roi en exil* who has thrown away some of the strings of his lute; a poet who has forgotten the fairest part of his kingdom.

However, all work criticises itself. Here is one of Mr. Henley's inspired jottings. According to the temperament of the reader, it will serve either as a model or as the reverse:

As with varnish red and glistening
Dripped his hair; his feet were rigid;
Raised, he settled stiffly sideways:
You could see the hurts were spinal.

He had fallen from an engine,
And been dragged along the metals.
It was hopeless, and they knew it;
So they covered him, and left him.

As he lay, by fits half sentient,
Inarticulately moaning,
With his stockinged feet protruded
Sharp and awkward from the blankets,

To his bed there came a woman,
Stood and looked and sighed a little,
And departed without speaking,
As himself a few hours after.

I was told she was his sweetheart.
They were on the eve of marriage.
She was quiet as a statue,
But her lip was gray and writhen.

In this poem, the rhythm and the music, such as it is, are obvious—perhaps a little too obvious. In the following I see nothing but ingeniously printed prose. It is a description—and a very accurate one—of a scene in a hospital ward. The medical students are supposed to be crowding round the doctor. What I quote is only a fragment, but the poem itself is a fragment:

So shows the ring
Seen, from behind, round a conjuror
Doing his pitch in the street.
High shoulders, low shoulders, broad shoulders,
narrow ones,
Round, square, and angular, serry and shove;

While from within a voice,
Gravely and weightily fluent,
Sounds; and then ceases; and suddenly
(Look at the stress of the shoulders!)
Out of a quiver of silence,
Over the hiss of the spray,
Comes a low cry, and the sound
Of breath quick intaken through teeth
Clenched in resolve. And the master
Breaks from the crowd, and goes,
Wiping his hands,
To the next bed, with his pupils
Flocking and whispering behind him.

Now one can see.
Case Number One
Sits (rather pale) with his bedclothes
Stripped up, and showing his foot
(Alas, for God's image!)
Swaddled in wet white lint
Brilliantly hideous with red.

Théophile Gautier once said that Flaubert's style was meant to be read, and his own style to be looked at. Mr. Henley's unrhymed rhythms form very dainty designs, from a typographical point of view. From the point of view of literature, they are a series of vivid, concentrated impressions, with a keen grip of fact, a terrible actuality, and an almost masterly power of picturesque presentation. But the poetic form —what of that?

Well, let us pass to the later poems, to the rondels and rondeaus, the sonnets and quatorzains, the echoes, and the ballades. How brilliant and fanciful this is! The Toyokuni colour-

print that suggested it could not be more delightful. It seems to have kept all the wilful fantastic charm of the original:

Was I a Samurai renowned,
Two-sworded, fierce, immense of bow?
A histrion angular and profound?
A priest? a porter?—Child, although
I have forgotten clean, I know
That in the shade of Fujisan,
What time the cherry-orchards blow,
I loved you once in old Japan.

As here you loiter, flowing-gowned
And hugely sashed, with pins a-row
Your quaint head as with flamelets crowned,
Demure, inviting—even so,
When merry maids in Miyako
To feel the sweet o' the year began,
And green gardens to overflow,
I loved you once in old Japan.

Clear shine the hills; the rice-fields round
Two cranes are circling; sleepy and slow,
A blue canal the lake's blue bound
Breaks at the bamboo bridge; and lo!
Touched with the sundown's spirit and glow,
I see you turn, with flirted fan,
Against the plum-tree's bloomy snow . . .
I loved you once in old Japan!

ENVOY.

Dear, 'twas a dozen lives ago;
But that I was a lucky man
The Toyokuni here will show:
I loved you—once—in old Japan!

This rondel, too—how light it is, and graceful!—

We'll to the woods and gather may
Fresh from the footprints of the rain.
We'll to the woods, at every vein
To drink the spirit of the day.

The winds of spring are out at play,
The needs of spring in heart and brain.
We'll to the woods and gather may
Fresh from the footprints of the rain.

The world's too near her end, you say?
Hark to the blackbird's mad refrain!
It waits for her, the vast Inane?
Then, girls, to help her on the way
We'll to the woods and gather may.

There are fine verses, also, scattered through this little book; some of them very strong, as—

Out of the night that covers me,
  Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
  For my unconquerable soul.

It matters not how strait the gate,
  How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
  I am the captain of my soul.

Others with a true touch of romance, as—

Or ever the knightly years were gone
  With the old world to the grave,
I was a king in Babylon,
  And you were a Christian slave.

And here and there we come across such felicitous phrases as—

> In the sand
> The gold prow-griffin claws a hold,

or—

> The spires
> Shine and are changed,

and many other graceful or fanciful lines, even 'the green sky's minor thirds' being perfectly right in its place, and a very refreshing bit of affectation in a volume where there is so much that is natural.

However, Mr. Henley is not to be judged by samples. Indeed, the most attractive thing in the book is no single poem that is in it, but the strong humane personality that stands behind both flawless and faulty work alike, and looks out through many masks, some of them beautiful, and some grotesque, and not a few misshapen. In the case with most of our modern poets, when we have analysed them down to an adjective, we can go no further, or we care to go no further; but with this book it is different. Through these reeds and pipes blows the very breath of life. It seems as if one could put one's hand upon the singer's heart and count its pulsations. There is something wholesome, virile and sane about the man's soul. Anybody can be reasonable, but to be sane is not common; and sane poets are as rare as blue lilies, though they may not be quite so delightful.

Let the great winds their worst and wildest blow,
Or the gold weather round us mellow slow;
We have fulfilled ourselves, and we can dare,
And we can conquer, though we may not share
In the rich quiet of the afterglow,
What is to come,

is the concluding stanza of the last rondeau—indeed, of the last poem in the collection, and the high, serene temper displayed in these lines serves at once as keynote and keystone to the book. The very lightness and slightness of so much of the work, its careless moods and casual fancies, seem to suggest a nature that is not primarily interested in art—a nature, like Sordello's, passionately enamoured of life, one to which lyre and lute are things of less importance. From this mere joy of living, this frank delight in experience for its own sake, this lofty indifference, and momentary unregretted ardours, come all the faults and all the beauties of the volume. But there is this difference between them—the faults are deliberate, and the result of much study; the beauties have the air of fascinating impromptus. Mr. Henley's healthy, if sometimes misapplied, confidence in the myriad suggestions of life gives him his charm. He is made to sing along the highways, not to sit down and write. If he took himself more seriously, his work would become trivial.

Mr. William Sharp takes himself very seriously and has written a preface to his *Romantic Ballads*

and Poems of Phantasy, which is, on the whole, the most interesting part of his volume. We are all, it seems, far too cultured, and lack robustness. 'There are those amongst us,' says Mr. Sharp, 'who would prefer a dexterously-turned triolet to such apparently uncouth measures as *Thomas the Rhymer*, or the ballad of *Clerk Saunders:* who would rather listen to the drawing-room music of the Villanelle than to the wild harp-playing by the mill-dams o' Binnorie, or the sough of the night-wind o'er drumly Annan water.' Such an expression as 'the drawing-room music of the Villanelle' is not very happy, and I cannot imagine any one with the smallest pretensions to culture preferring a dexterously turned triolet to a fine imaginative ballad, as it is only the Philistine who ever dreams of comparing works of art that are absolutely different in motive, in treatment, and in form. If English Poetry is in danger—and, according to Mr. Sharp, the poor nymph is in a very critical state—what she has to fear is not the fascination of dainty metre or delicate form, but the predominance of the intellectual spirit over the spirit of beauty. Lord Tennyson dethroned Wordsworth as a literary influence, and later on Mr. Swinburne filled all the mountain valleys with echoes of his own song. The influence to-day is that of Mr. Browning. And as for the triolets, and the rondels, and the careful study of metrical subtleties, these things are merely the signs of a desire for perfection in small things and of the recognition of poetry as an art.

They have had certainly one good result—they have made our minor poets readable, and have not left us entirely at the mercy of geniuses.

But, says Mr. Sharp, every one is far too literary; even Rossetti is too literary. What we want is simplicity and directness of utterance; these should be the dominant characteristics of poetry. Well, is that quite so certain? Are simplicity and directness of utterance absolute essentials for poetry? I think not. They may be admirable for the drama, admirable for all those imitative forms of literature that claim to mirror life in its externals and its accidents, admirable for quiet narrative, admirable in their place; but their place is not everywhere. Poetry has many modes of music; she does not blow through one pipe alone. Directness of utterance is good, but so is the subtle recasting of thought into a new and delightful form. Simplicity is good, but complexity, mystery, strangeness, symbolism, obscurity even, these have their value. Indeed, properly speaking, there is no such thing as Style; there are merely styles, that is all.

One cannot help feeling also that everything that Mr. Sharp says in his preface was said at the beginning of the century by Wordsworth, only where Wordsworth called us back to nature, Mr. Sharp invites us to woo romance. Romance, he tells us, is 'in the air.' A new romantic movement is imminent: 'I anticipate,' he says, 'that many of our poets, especially those of the youngest generation, will shortly turn towards the "bal-

lad" as a poetic vehicle: and that the next year or two will see much romantic poetry.'

The ballad! Well, Mr. Andrew Lang, some months ago, signed the death-warrant of the ballade, and—though I hope that in this respect Mr. Lang resembles the Queen in *Alice in Wonderland*, whose bloodthirsty orders were by general consent never carried into execution—it must be admitted that the number of ballades given to us by some of our poets was, perhaps, a little excessive. But the ballad? *Sir Patrick Spens*, *Clerk Saunders*, *Thomas the Rhymer*—are these to be our archetypes, our models, the sources of our inspiration? They are certainly great imaginative poems. In Chatterton's *Ballad of Charity*, Coleridge's *Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner*, the *La Belle Dame sans Merci* of Keats, the *Sister Helen* of Rossetti, we can see what marvellous works of art the spirit of old romance may fashion. But to preach a spirit is one thing, to propose a form is another. It is true that Mr. Sharp warns the rising generation against imitation. A ballad, he reminds them, does not necessarily denote a poem in quatrains and in antique language. But his own poems, as I think will be seen later, are, in their way, warnings, and show the danger of suggesting any definite 'poetic vehicle.' And, further, are simplicity and directness of utterance really the dominant characteristics of these old imaginative ballads that Mr. Sharp so enthusiastically, and, in some particulars, so wisely praises? It does not seem to me to be

so. We are always apt to think that the voices which sang at the dawn of poetry were simpler, fresher, and more natural than ours, and that the world which the early poets looked at, and through which they walked, had a kind of poetical quality of its own, and could pass, almost without changing, into song. The snow lies thick now upon Olympus, and its scarped sides are bleak and barren, but once, we fancy, the white feet of the Muses brushed the dew from the anemones in the morning, and at evening came Apollo to sing to the shepherds in the vale. But in this we are merely lending to other ages what we desire, or think we desire, for our own. Our historical sense is at fault. Every century that produces poetry is, so far, an artificial century, and the work that seems to us the most natural and simple product of its time is probably the result of the most deliberate and self-conscious effort. For Nature is always behind the age. It takes a great artist to be thoroughly modern.

Let us turn to the poems, which have really only the preface to blame for their somewhat late appearance. The best is undoubtedly *The Weird of Michael Scott*, and these stanzas are a fair example of its power:

> Then Michael Scott laughed long and loud:
> 'Whan shone the mune ahint yon cloud
> I speered the towers that saw my birth—
> Lang, lang, sall wait my cauld grey shroud,
> Lang cauld and weet my bed o' earth!'

But as by Stair he rode full speed
His horse began to pant and bleed;
'Win hame, win hame, my bonnie mare,
Win hame if thou wouldst rest and feed,
Win hame, we're nigh the House of Stair!'

But, with a shrill heart-bursten yell
The white horse stumbled, plunged, and fell,
And loud a summoning voice arose,
'Is't White-Horse Death that rides frae Hell,
Or Michael Scott that hereby goes?'

'Ah, Laird of Stair, I ken ye weel!
Avaunt, or I your saul sall steal,
An' send ye howling through the wood
A wild man-wolf—aye, ye maun reel
An' cry upon your Holy Rood!'

There is a good deal of vigour, no doubt, in these lines; but one cannot help asking whether this is to be the common tongue of the future Renaissance of Romance. Are we all to talk Scotch, and to speak of the moon as the 'mune,' and the soul as the 'saul'? I hope not. And yet if this Renaissance is to be a vital, living thing, it must have its linguistic side. Just as the spiritual development of music, and the artistic development of painting, have always been accompanied, if not occasioned, by the discovery of some new instrument or some fresh medium, so, in the case of any important literary movement, half of its strength resides in its language. If it does not bring with it a rich and novel mode of expression, it is doomed either to sterility or to imitation. Dialect, archaisms and the like, will not do. Take, for instance, another

poem of Mr. Sharp's, a poem which he calls *The Deith-Tide:*

> The weet saut wind is blawing
> Upon the misty shore:
> As, like a stormy snawing,
> The deid go streaming o'er:—
> The wan drown'd deid sail wildly
> Frae out each drumly wave:
> It's O and O for the weary sea,
> And O for a quiet grave.

This is simply a very clever *pastiche*, nothing more, and our language is not likely to be permanently enriched by such words as 'weet,' 'saut,' 'blawing,' and 'snawing.' Even 'drumly,' an adjective of which Mr. Sharp is so fond that he uses it both in prose and verse, seems to me to be hardly an adequate basis for a new romantic movement.

However, Mr. Sharp does not always write in dialect. *The Son of Allan* can be read without any difficulty, and *Phantasy* can be read with pleasure. They are both very charming poems in their way, and none the less charming because the cadences of the one recall *Sister Helen*, and the motive of the other reminds us of *La Belle Dame sans Merci*. But those who wish thoroughly to enjoy Mr. Sharp's poems should not read his preface; just as those who approve of the preface should avoid reading the poems. I cannot help saying that I think the preface a great mistake. The work that follows it is quite inadequate, and there seems little use in herald-

ing a dawn that rose long ago, and proclaiming a Renaissance whose first-fruits, if we are to judge them by any high standard of perfection, are of so ordinary a character.

Miss Mary Robinson has also written a preface to her little volume, *Poems, Ballads, and a Garden Play*, but the preface is not very serious, and does not propose any drastic change or any immediate revolution in English literature. Miss Robinson's poems have always the charm of delicate music and graceful expression; but they are, perhaps, weakest where they try to be strong, and certainly least satisfying where they seek to satisfy. Her fanciful flower-crowned Muse, with her tripping steps and pretty, wilful ways, should not write Antiphons to the Unknowable, or try to grapple with abstract intellectual problems. Hers is not the hand to unveil mysteries, nor hers the strength for the solving of secrets. She should never leave her garden, and as for her wandering out into the desert to ask the Sphinx questions, that should be sternly forbidden to her. Dürer's *Melancolia*, that serves as the frontispiece to this dainty book, looks sadly out of place. Her seat is with the sibyls, not with the nymphs. What has she to do with shepherdesses piping about Darwinism and 'The Eternal Mind'?

However, if the *Songs of the Inner Life* are not very successful, the *Spring Songs* are delightful. They follow each other like wind-blown petals,

and make one feel how much more charming flower is than fruit, apple-blossom than apple. There are some artistic temperaments that should never come to maturity, that should always remain in the region of promise and should dread autumn with its harvesting more than winter with its frosts. Such seems to me the temperament that this volume reveals. The first poem of the second series, *La Belle au Bois Dormant*, is worth all the more serious and thoughtful work, and has far more chance of being remembered. It is not always to high aim and lofty ambition that the prize is given. If Daphne had gone to meet Apollo, she would never have known what laurels are.

From these fascinating spring lyrics and idylls we pass to the romantic ballads. One artistic faculty Miss Robinson certainly possesses—the faculty of imitation. There is an element of imitation in all the arts; it is to be found in literature as much as in painting, and the danger of valuing it too little is almost as great as the danger of setting too high a value upon it. To catch, by dainty mimicry, the very mood and manner of antique work, and yet to retain that touch of modern passion without which the old form would be dull and empty; to win from long-silent lip some faint echo of their music, and to add to it a music of one's own; to take the mode and fashion of a bygone age, and to experiment with it, and search curiously for its possibilities; there is a pleasure in all this. It is a kind of

literary acting, and has something of the charm of the art of the stage-player. And how well, on the whole, Miss Robinson does it! Here is the opening of the ballad of Rudel:

There was in all the world of France
No singer half so sweet:
The first note of his viol brought
A crowd into the street.

He stepped as young, and bright, and glad
As Angel Gabriel.
And only when we heard him sing
Or eyes forgot Rudel.

And as he sat in Avignon,
With princes at their wine,
In all that lusty company
Was none so fresh and fine.

His kirtle's of the Arras-blue,
His cap of pearls and green;
His golden curls fall tumbling round
The fairest face I've seen.

How Gautier would have liked this from the same poem!—

Hew the timbers of sandal-wood,
And planks of ivory;
Rear up the shining masts of gold,
And let us put to sea.

Sew the sails with a silken thread
That all are silken too;
Sew them with scarlet pomegranates
Upon a sheet of blue.

Rig the ship with a rope of gold
And let us put to sea.
And now, good-bye to good Marseilles,
And hey for Tripoli!

The ballad of the Duke of Gueldres's wedding is very clever:

'O welcome, Mary Harcourt,
Thrice welcome, lady mine;
There's not a knight in all the world
Shall be as true as thine.

'There's venison in the aumbry, Mary,
There's claret in the vat;
Come in, and breakfast in the hall
Where once my mother sat!'

O red, red is the wine that flows,
And sweet the minstrel's play,
But white is Mary Harcourt
Upon her wedding-day.

O many are the wedding guests
That sit on either side;
But pale below her crimson flowers
And homesick is the bride.

Miss Robinson's critical sense is at once too sound and too subtle to allow her to think that any great Renaissance of Romance will necessarily follow from the adoption of the ballad-form in poetry; but her work in this style is very pretty and charming, and *The Tower of St. Maur*, which tells of the father who built up his little son in the wall of his castle in order that the foundations should stand sure, is admirable in its way. The few touches of archaism in language that she introduces are quite sufficient for their purpose, and though she fully appreciates the importance

of the Celtic spirit in literature, she does not consider it necessary to talk of 'blawing' and 'snawing.' As for the garden play, *Our Lady of the Broken Heart*, as it is called, the bright, birdlike snatches of song that break in here and there—as the singing does in *Pippa Passes*—form a very welcome relief to the somewhat ordinary movement of the blank verse, and suggest to us again where Miss Robinson's real power lies. Not a poet in the true creative sense, she is still a very perfect artist in poetry, using language as one might use a very precious material, and producing her best work by the rejection of the great themes and large intellectual motives that belong to fuller and richer song. When she essays such themes, she certainly fails. Her instrument is the reed, not the lyre. Only those should sing of Death whose song is stronger than Death is.

The collected poems of the author of *John Halifax, Gentleman*, have a pathetic interest as the artistic record of a very gracious and comely life. They bring us back to the days when Philip Bourke Marston was young—'Philip, my King,' as she called him in the pretty poem of that name; to the days of the Great Exhibition, with the universal piping about peace; to those later terrible Crimean days, when Alma and Balaclava were words on the lips of our poets; and to days when Leonora was considered a very romantic name.

Leonora, Leonora,
How the word rolls—*Leonora*.
Lion-like in full-mouthed sound,
Marching o'er the metric ground,
With a tawny tread sublime.
So your name moves, Leonora,
Down my desert rhyme.

Mrs. Craik's best poems are, on the whole, those that are written in blank verse; and these, though not prosaic, remind one that prose was her true medium of expression. But some of the rhymed poems have considerable merit. These may serve as examples of Mrs. Craik's style:

A SKETCH

Dost thou thus love me, O thou all beloved,
In whose large store the very meanest coin
Would out-buy my whole wealth? Yet here thou comest
Like a kind heiress from her purple and down
Uprising, who for pity cannot sleep,
But goes forth to the stranger at her gate—
The beggared stranger at her beauteous gate—
And clothes and feeds; scarce blest till she has blest.

But dost thou love me, O thou pure of heart,
Whose very looks are prayers? What couldst thou see
In this forsaken pool by the yew-wood's side,
To sit down at its bank, and dip thy hand,
Saying, 'It is so clear!'—and lo! ere long,
Its blackness caught the shimmer of thy wings,
Its slimes slid downward from thy stainless palm,
Its depths grew still, that there thy form might rise.

THE NOVICE

It is near morning. Ere the next night fall
I shall be made the bride of heaven. Then home
To my still marriage-chamber I shall come,
And spouseless, childless, watch the slow years crawl.

These lips will never meet a softer touch
Than the stone crucifix I kiss; no child
Will clasp this neck. Ah, virgin-mother mild,
Thy painted bliss will mock me overmuch.

This is the last time I shall twist the hair
My mother's hand wreathed, till in dust she lay:
The name, her name given on my baptism day,
This is the last time I shall ever bear.

O weary world, O heavy life, farewell!
Like a tired child that creeps into the dark
To sob itself asleep, where none will mark,—
So creep I to my silent convent cell.

Friends, lovers whom I loved not, kindly hearts
Who grieve that I should enter this still door,
Grieve not. Closing behind me evermore,
Me from all anguish, as all joy, it parts.

The volume chronicles the moods of a sweet and thoughtful nature, and though many things in it may seem somewhat old-fashioned, it is still very pleasant to read, and has a faint perfume of withered rose-leaves about it.

WITH SA'DI IN THE GARDEN;

OR, THE BOOK OF LOVE

WRITERS of poetical prose are rarely good poets. They may crowd their page with gorgeous epithet and resplendent phrase, may pile Pelions of adjectives upon Ossas of descriptions, may abandon themselves to highly coloured diction and rich luxuriance of imagery, but if their verse lacks the true rhythmical life of verse, if their method is devoid of the self-restraint of the real artist, all their efforts are of very little avail. 'Asiatic' prose is possibly useful for journalistic purposes, but 'Asiatic' poetry is not to be encouraged. Indeed, poetry may be said to need far more self-restraint than prose. Its conditions are more exquisite. It produces its effects by more subtle means. It must not be allowed to degenerate into mere rhetoric or mere eloquence. It is, in one sense, the most self-conscious of all the arts, as it is never a means to an end but always an end in itself. Sir Edwin Arnold has a very picturesque or, perhaps we should say, a very pictorial style. He knows

India better than any living Englishman knows it, and Hindoostanee better than any English writer should know it. If his descriptions lack distinction, they have at least the merit of being true, and when he does not interlard his pages with an interminable and intolerable series of foreign words he is pleasant enough. But he is not a poet. He is simply a poetical writer—that is all.

However, poetical writers have their uses, and there is a good deal in Sir Edwin Arnold's last volume that will repay perusal. The scene of the story is placed in a mosque attached to the monument of the Taj-Mahal, and a group composed of a learned Mirza, two singing girls with their attendant, and an Englishman, is supposed to pass the night there reading the chapter of Sa'di upon 'Love,' and conversing upon that theme with accompaniments of music and dancing. The Englishman is, of course, Sir Edwin Arnold himself:

> lover of India,
> Too much her lover! for his heart lived there
> How far soever wandered thence his feet.

Lady Dufferin appears as

> Lady Duffreen, the mighty Queen's Vice-queen!

which is really one of the most dreadful blank-verse lines that we have come across for some time past. M. Renan is 'a priest of Frangestan,' who writes in 'glittering French'; Lord Tennyson is

> One we honour for his songs—
> Greater than Sa'di's self—

and the Darwinians appear as the 'Mollahs of the West,' who

> hold Adam's sons
> Sprung of the sea-slug.

All this is excellent fooling in its way, a kind of play-acting in literature; but the best parts of the book are the descriptions of the Taj itself, which are extremely elaborate, and the various translations from Sa'di with which the volume is interspersed. The great monument Shah Jahan built for Arjamand is

> Instinct with loveliness—not masonry!
> Not architecture! as all others are,
> But the proud passion of an Emperor's love
> Wrought into living stone, which gleams and soars
> With body of beauty shrining soul and thought,
> Insomuch that it haps as when some face
> Divinely fair unveils before our eyes—
> Some woman beautiful unspeakably—
> And the blood quickens, and the spirit leaps,
> And will to worship bends the half-yielded knees,
> Which breath forgets to breathe: so is the Taj;
> You see it with the heart, before the eyes
> Have scope to gaze. All white! snow white! cloud white!

We cannot say much in praise of the sixth line:

> Insomuch that it haps as when some face:

it is curiously awkward and unmusical. But this passage from Sa'di is remarkable:

> When Earth, bewildered, shook in earthquake-throes,
> With mountain-roots He bound her borders close;
> Turkis and ruby in her rocks He stored,
> And on her green branch hung His crimson rose.

He shapes dull seed to fair imaginings;
Who paints with moisture as He painteth things?
Look! from the cloud He sheds one drop on ocean,
As from the Father's loins one drop He brings;—

And out of that He forms a peerless pearl,
And, out of this, a cypress boy or girl;
Utterly wotting all their innermosts,
For all to Him is visible! Uncurl

Your cold coils, Snakes! Creep forth, ye thrifty Ants!
Handless and strengthless He provides your wants
Who from the 'Is not' planned the 'Is to be,'
And Life in non-existent void implants.

Sir Edwin Arnold suffers, of course, from the inevitable comparison that one cannot help making between his work and the work of Edward Fitzgerald, and certainly Fitzgerald could never have written such a line as 'utterly wotting all their innermosts,' but it is interesting to read almost any translation of those wonderful Oriental poets with their strange blending of philosophy and sensuousness, of simple parable or fable and obscure mystic utterance. What we regret most in Sir Edwin Arnold's book is his habit of writing in what really amounts to a sort of 'pigeon English.' When we are told that 'Lady Duffreen, the mighty Queen's Vice-queen,' paces among the *charpoys* of the ward 'no whit afraid of *sitla*, or of *tap*'; when the Mirza explains—

âg lejao!
To light the kallians for the Saheb and me,

and the attendant obeys with '*Achcha! Achcha!*' when we are invited to listen to 'the *Vina* and the

drum' and told about *ekkas*, *Byrâgis*, *hamals* and *Tamboora*, all that we can say is that to such *ghazals* we are not prepared to say either *Shamash* or *Afrîn*. In English poetry we do not want

> *chatkis* for the toes,
> *Jasams* for elbow-bands, and *gote* and *har*,
> *Bala* and *mala*.

This is not local colour; it is a sort of local discoloration. It does not add anything to the vividness of the scene. It does not bring the Orient more clearly before us. It is simply an inconvenience to the reader and a mistake on the part of the writer. It may be difficult for a poet to find English synonyms for Asiatic expressions, but even if it were impossible it is none the less a poet's duty to find them. We are sorry that a scholar and a man of culture like Sir Edwin Arnold should have been guilty of what is really an act of treason against our literature. But for this error, his book, though not in any sense a work of genius or even of high artistic merit, would still have been of some enduring value. As it is, Sir Edwin Arnold has translated Sa'di and some one must translate Sir Edwin Arnold.

AUSTRALIAN POETRY

MR. SLADEN dedicates his anthology (or, perhaps, we should say his herbarium) of Australian song to Mr. Edmund Gosse, 'whose exquisite critical faculty is,' he tells us, 'as conspicuous in his poems as in his lectures on poetry.' After so graceful a compliment Mr. Gosse must certainly deliver a series of discourses upon Antipodean art before the Cambridge undergraduates, who will, no doubt, be very much interested on hearing about Gordon, Kendall and Domett, to say nothing of the extraordinary collection of mediocrities whom Mr. Sladen has somewhat ruthlessly dragged from their modest and well-merited obscurity. Gordon, however, is very badly represented in Mr. Sladen's book, the only three specimens of his work that are included being an unrevised fragment, his *Valedictory Poem* and *An Exile's Farewell*. The latter is, of course, touching, but then the commonplace always touches, and it is a great pity that Mr. Sladen was unable to come to any financial ar-

rangement with the holders of Gordon's copyright. The loss to the volume that now lies before us is quite irreparable. Through Gordon Australia found her first fine utterance in song.

Still, there are some other singers here well worth studying, and it is interesting to read about poets who lie under the shadow of the gum-tree, gather wattle blossoms and buddawong and sarsaparilla for their loves, and wander through the glades of Mount Baw-baw listening to the careless raptures of the mopoke. To them November is

> The wonder with the golden wings,
> Who lays one hand in Summer's, one in Spring's:

January is full of 'breaths of myrrh, and subtle hints of rose-lands';

> She is the warm, live month of lustre—she
> Makes glad the land and lulls the strong sad sea;

while February is 'the true Demeter,' and

> With rich warm vine-blood splashed from heel to knee,
> Comes radiant through the yellow woodlands.

Each month, as it passes, calls for new praise and for music different from our own. July is a 'lady, born in wind and rain'; in August

> Across the range, by every scarred black fell,
> Strong Winter blows his horn of wild farewell;

while October is 'the queen of all the year,' the 'lady of the yellow hair,' who strays 'with blossom-trammelled feet' across the 'haughty-featured hills,' and brings the Spring with her. We

must certainly try to accustom ourselves to the mopoke and the sarsaparilla plant, and to make the gum-tree and the buddawong as dear to us as the olives and the narcissi of white Colonus. After all, the Muses are great travellers, and the same foot that stirred the Cumnor cowslips may some day brush the fallen gold of the wattle blossoms and tread delicately over the tawny bush-grass.

Mr. Sladen has, of course, a great belief in the possibilities of Australian poetry. There are in Australia, he tells us, far more writers capable of producing good work than has been assumed. It is only natural, he adds, that this should be so, 'for Australia has one of those delightful climates conducive to rest in the open air The middle of the day is so hot that it is really more healthful to lounge about than to take stronger exercise.' Well, lounging in the open air is not a bad school for poets, but it largely depends on the lounger. What strikes one on reading over Mr. Sladen's collection is the depressing provinciality of mood and manner in almost every writer. Page follows page, and we find nothing but echoes without music, reflections without beauty, second-rate magazine verses and third-rate verses for Colonial newspapers. Poe seems to have had some influence—at least, there are several parodies of his method—and one or two writers have read Mr. Swinburne; but, on the whole, we have artless Nature in her most irritating form. Of course Australia is young, younger even than America,

whose youth is now one of her oldest and most hallowed traditions, but the entire want of originality of treatment is curious. And yet not so curious, perhaps, after all. Youth is rarely original.

There are, however, some exceptions. Henry Clarence Kendall had a true poetic gift. The series of poems on the Austral months, from which we have already quoted, is full of beautiful things; Landor's *Rose Aylmer* is a classic in its way, but Kendall's *Rose Lorraine* is in parts not unworthy to be mentioned after it; and the poem entitled *Beyond Kerguelen* has a marvellous music about it, a wonderful rhythm of words and a real richness of utterance. Some of the lines are strangely powerful, and, indeed, in spite of its exaggerated alliteration, or perhaps in consequence of it, the whole poem is a most remarkable work of art.

Down in the South, by the waste without sail on it—
  Far from the zone of the blossom and tree—
Lieth, with winter and whirlwind and wail on it,
  Ghost of a land by the ghost of a sea.
Weird is the mist from the summit to base of it;
  Sun of its heaven is wizened and grey;
Phantom of light is the light on the face of it—
  Never is night on it, never is day!
Here is the shore without flower or bird on it;
  Here is no litany sweet of the springs—
Only the haughty, harsh thunder is heard on it,
  Only the storm, with a roar in its wings!

Back in the dawn of this beautiful sphere, on it—
  Land of the dolorous, desolate face—
Beamed the blue day; and the beautiful year on it
  Fostered the leaf and the blossom of grace.

Grand were the lights of its midsummer noon on it—
Mornings of majesty shone on its seas;
Glitter of star and the glory of moon on it
Fell, in the march of the musical breeze.
Valleys and hills, with the whisper of wing in them,
Dells of the daffodil—spaces impearled,
Flowered and flashed with the splendour of spring in them,
Back in the morn of this wonderful world

Mr. Sladen speaks of Alfred Domett as 'the author of one of the great poems of a century in which Shelley and Keats, Byron and Scott, Wordsworth and Tennyson have all flourished,' but the extracts he gives from *Ranolf and Amohia* hardly substantiate this claim, although the song of the Tree-God in the fourth book is clever but exasperating.

A Midsummer's Noon, by Charles Harpur, 'the grey forefather of Australian poetry,' is pretty and graceful, and Thomas Henry's *Wood-Notes* and Miss Veel's *Saturday Night* are worth reading; but, on the whole, the Australian poets are extremely dull and prosaic. There seem to be no sirens in the New World. As for Mr. Sladen himself, he has done his work very conscientiously. Indeed, in one instance he almost re-writes an entire poem in consequence of the manuscript having reached him in a mutilated condition.

A pleasant land is the land of dreams
At the back of the shining air!
It hath *sunnier* skies and *sheenier* streams,
And gardens *than Earth's more* fair,

is the first verse of this lucubration, and Mr. Sladen informs us with justifiable pride that the parts printed in italics are from his own pen! This is certainly editing with a vengeance, and we cannot help saying that it reflects more credit on Mr. Sladen's good nature than on his critical or his poetical powers. The appearance, also, in a volume of 'poems produced in Australia,' of selections from Horne's *Orion* cannot be defended, especially as we are given no specimen of the poetry Horne wrote during the time that he actually was in Australia, where he held the office of 'Warden of the Blue Mountains'—a position which, as far as the title goes, is the loveliest ever given to any poet, and would have suited Wordsworth admirably: Wordsworth, that is to say, at his best, for he not infrequently wrote like the Distributor of Stamps. However, Mr. Sladen has shown great energy in the compilation of this bulky volume which, though it does not contain much that is of any artistic value, has a certain historical interest, especially for those who care to study the conditions of intellectual life in the colonies of a great empire. The biographical notices of the enormous crowd of verse-makers which is included in this volume are chiefly from the pen of Mr. Patchett Martin. Some of them are not very satisfactory. 'Formerly of West Australia, now residing at Boston, U.S. Has published several volumes of poetry,' is a ludicrously inadequate account of such a man as John Boyle O'Reilly, while in 'poet, essayist, critic,

and journalist, one of the most prominent figures in literary London,' few will recognise the industrious Mr. William Sharp.

Still, on the whole, we should be grateful for a volume that has given us specimens of Kendall's work, and perhaps Mr. Sladen will some day produce an anthology of Australian poetry, not a herbarium of Australian verse. His present book has many good qualities, but it is almost unreadable.

POETRY AND PRISON

PRISON has had an admirable effect on Mr. Wilfrid Blunt as a poet. The *Love Sonnets of Proteus*, in spite of their clever Musset-like modernities and their swift brilliant wit, were but affected or fantastic at best. They were simply the records of passing moods and moments, of which some were sad and others sweet, and not a few shameful. Their subject was not of high or serious import. They contained much that was wilful and weak. *In Vinculis*, upon the other hand, is a book that stirs one by its fine sincerity of purpose, its lofty and impassioned thought, its depth and ardour of intense feeling. 'Imprisonment,' says Mr. Blunt in his preface, 'is a reality of discipline most useful to the modern soul, lapped as it is in physical sloth and self-indulgence. Like a sickness or a spiritual retreat it purifies and ennobles; and the soul emerges from it stronger and more self-contained.' To him, certainly, it has been a mode of purification. The opening sonnets, composed in the bleak cell of Galway Gaol, and written down on

the fly-leaves of the prisoner's prayer-book, are full of things nobly conceived and nobly uttered, and show that though Mr. Balfour may enforce 'plain living' by his prison regulations, he cannot prevent 'high thinking' or in any way limit or constrain the freedom of a man's soul. They are, of course, intensely personal in expression. They could not fail to be so. But the personality that they reveal has nothing petty or ignoble about it. The petulant cry of the shallow egoist which was the chief characteristic of the *Love Sonnets of Proteus* is not to be found here. In its place we have wild grief and terrible scorn, fierce rage and flame-like passion. Such a sonnet as the following comes out of the very fire of heart and brain:

> God knows, 'twas not with a fore-reasoned plan
> I left the easeful dwellings of my peace,
> And sought this combat with ungodly Man,
> And ceaseless still through years that do not cease
> Have warred with Powers and Principalities.
> My natural soul, ere yet these strifes began,
> Was as a sister diligent to please
> And loving all, and most the human clan.
>
> God knows it. And He knows how the world's tears
> Touched me. And He is witness of my wrath,
> How it was kindled against murderers
> Who slew for gold, and how upon their path
> I met them. Since which day the World in arms
> Strikes at my life with angers and alarms.

And this sonnet has all the strange strength of that despair which is but the prelude to a larger hope:

I thought to do a deed of chivalry,
An act of worth, which haply in her sight
Who was my mistress should recorded be
And of the nations. And, when thus the fight
Faltered and men once bold with faces white
Turned this and that way in excuse to flee,
I only stood, and by the foeman's might
Was overborne and mangled cruelly.

Then crawled I to her feet, in whose dear cause
I made this venture, and 'Behold,' I said,
'How I am wounded for thee in these wars.'
But she, 'Poor cripple, would'st thou I should wed
A limbless trunk?' and laughing turned from me.
Yet she was fair, and her name 'Liberty.'

The sonnet beginning

> A prison is a convent without God—
> Poverty, Chastity, Obedience
> Its precepts are:

is very fine; and this, written just after entering the gaol, is powerful:

Naked I came into the world of pleasure,
And naked come I to this house of pain.
Here at the gate I lay down my life's treasure,
My pride, my garments and my name with men.
The world and I henceforth shall be as twain,
No sound of me shall pierce for good or ill
These walls of grief. Nor shall I hear the vain
Laughter and tears of those who love me still.

Within, what new life waits me! Little ease,
Cold lying, hunger, nights of wakefulness,
Harsh orders given, no voice to soothe or please,
Poor thieves for friends, for books rules meaningless
This is the grave—nay, hell. Yet, Lord of Might,
Still in Thy light my spirit shall see light.

But, indeed, all the sonnets are worth reading and *The Canon of Aughrim*, the longest poem in the book, is a most masterly and dramatic description of the tragic life of the Irish peasant. Literature is not much indebted to Mr. Balfour for his sophistical *Defence of Philosophic Doubt* which is one of the dullest books we know, but it must be admitted that by sending Mr. Blunt to gaol he has converted a clever rhymer into an earnest and deep-thinking poet. The narrow confines of the prison cell seem to suit the 'sonnet's scanty plot of ground,' and an unjust imprisonment for a noble cause strengthens as well as deepens the nature.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO WALT WHITMAN

'NO one will get at my verses who insists upon viewing them as a literary performance . . . or as aiming mainly toward art and æstheticism.' *Leaves of Grass* . . . has mainly been the outcropping of my own emotional and other personal nature—an attempt, from first to last, to put *a Person*, a human being (myself, in the latter half of the Nineteenth Century in America,) freely, fully and truly on record. I could not find any similar personal record in current literature that satisfied me.' In these words Walt Whitman gives us the true attitude we should adopt towards his work, having, indeed, a much saner view of the value and meaning of that work than either his eloquent admirers or noisy detractors can boast of possessing. His last book, *November Boughs*, as he calls it, published in the winter of the old man's life, reveals to us, not indeed a soul's tragedy, for its last note is one of joy and hope, and noble and unshaken faith in all that is fine

and worthy of such faith, but certainly the drama of a human soul, and puts on record with a simplicity that has in it both sweetness and strength the record of his spiritual development, and of the aim and motive both of the manner and the matter of his work. His strange mode of expression is shown in these pages to have been the result of deliberate and self-conscious choice. The 'barbaric yawp' which he sent over 'the roofs of the world' so many years ago, and which wrung from Mr. Swinburne's lip such lofty panegyric in song and such loud clamorous censure in prose, appears here in what will be to many an entirely new light. For in his very rejection of art Walt Whitman is an artist. He tried to produce a certain effect by certain means and he succeeded. There is much method in what many have termed his madness, too much method, indeed, some may be tempted to fancy.

In the story of his life, as he tells it to us, we find him at the age of sixteen beginning a definite and philosophical study of literature:

> Summers and falls, I used to go off, sometimes for a week at a stretch, down in the country, or to Long Island's seashores—there, in the presence of outdoor influences, I went over thoroughly the Old and New Testaments, and absorb'd (probably to better advantage for me than in any library or indoor room—it makes such difference *where* you read) Shakspere, Ossian, the best translated versions I could get of Homer, Eschylus, Sophocles, the old German Nibelungen, the ancient Hindoo poems, and one or two other masterpieces, Dante's among them. As it happen'd, I read the latter mostly in an old wood. The *Iliad* . . .

I read first thoroughly on the peninsula of Orient, northeast end of Long Island, in a shelter'd hollow of rock and sand, with the sea on each side. (I have wonder'd since why I was not overwhelm'd by those mighty masters. Likely because I read them, as described, in the full presence of Nature, under the sun, with the far-spreading landscape and vistas, or the sea rolling in.)

Edgar Allan Poe's amusing bit of dogmatism that, for our occasions and our day, 'there can be no such thing as a long poem,' fascinated him. 'The same thought had been haunting my mind before,' he said, 'but Poe's argument . . . work'd the sum out, and proved it to me,' and the English translation of the Bible seems to have suggested to him the possibility of a poetic form which, while retaining the spirit of poetry, would still be free from the trammels of rhyme and of a definite metrical system. Having thus, to a certain degree, settled upon what one might call the 'technique' of Whitmanism, he began to brood upon the nature of that spirit which was to give life to the strange form. The central point of the poetry of the future seemed to him to be necessarily 'an identical body and soul, a personality,' in fact, which personality, he tells us frankly, 'after many considerations and ponderings I deliberately settled should be myself.' However, for the true creation and revealing of this personality, at first only dimly felt, a new stimulus was needed. This came from the Civil War. After describing the many dreams and passions of his boyhood and early manhood, he goes on to say:

These, however, and much more might have gone on and come to naught (almost positively would have come to naught,) if a sudden, vast, terrible, direct and indirect stimulus for new and national declamatory expression had not been given to me. It is certain, I say, that although I had made a start before, only from the occurrence of the Secession War, and what it show'd me as by flashes of lightning, with the emotional depths it sounded and arous'd (of course, I don't mean in my own heart only, I saw it just as plainly in others, in millions)—that only from the strong flare and provocation of that war's sights and scenes the final reasons-for-being of an autochthonic and passionate song definitely came forth.

I went down to the war fields of Virginia . . . lived thenceforward in camp—saw great battles and the days and nights afterward—partook of all the fluctuations, gloom, despair, hopes again arous'd, courage evoked—death readily risk'd—*the cause*, too—along and filling those agonistic and lurid following years . . . the real parturition years . . . of this henceforth homogeneous Union. Without those three or four years and the experiences they gave, *Leaves of Grass* would not now be existing.

Having thus obtained the necessary stimulus for the quickening and awakening of the personal self, some day to be endowed with universality, he sought to find new notes of song, and, passing beyond the mere passion for expression, he aimed at 'Suggestiveness' first.

I round and finish little, if anything; and could not, consistently with my scheme. The reader will have his or her part to do, just as much as I have had mine. I seek less to state or display any theme or thought, and more to bring you, reader, into the atmosphere of the theme or thought—there to pursue your own flight.

Another 'impetus-word' is Comradeship, and other 'word-signs' are Good Cheer, Content

and Hope. Individuality, especially, he sought for:

I have allow'd the stress of my poems from beginning to end to bear upon American individuality and assist it—not only because that is a great lesson in Nature, amid all her generalising laws, but as counterpoise to the leveling tendencies of Democracy—and for other reasons. Defiant of ostensible literary and other conventions, I avowedly chant 'the great pride of man in himself,' and permit it to be more or less a *motif* of nearly all my verse. I think this pride indispensable to an American. I think it not inconsistent with obedience, humility, deference, and self-questioning.

A new theme also was to be found in the relation of the sexes, conceived in a natural, simple and healthy form, and he protests against poor Mr. William Rossetti's attempt to Bowdlerise and expurgate his song.

From another point of view *Leaves of Grass* is avowedly the song of Sex and Amativeness, and even Animality—though meanings that do not usually go along with these words are behind all, and will duly emerge; and all are sought to be lifted into a different light and atmosphere. Of this feature, intentionally palpable in a few lines, I shall only say the espousing principle of those lines so gives breath to my whole scheme that the bulk of the pieces might as well have been left unwritten were those lines omitted. . . .

Universal as are certain facts and symptoms of communities . . . there is nothing so rare in modern conventions and poetry as their normal recognizance. Literature is always calling in the doctor for consultation and confession, and always giving evasions and swathing suppressions in place of that 'heroic nudity' on which only a genuine diagnosis . . . can be built. And in respect to editions of

Leaves of Grass in time to come (if there should be such) I take occasion now to confirm those lines with the settled convictions and deliberate renewals of thirty years, and to hereby prohibit, as far as word of mine can do so, any elision of them.

But beyond all these notes and moods and motives is the lofty spirit of a grand and free acceptance of all things that are worthy of existence. He desired, he says, 'to formulate a poem whose every thought or fact should directly or indirectly be or connive at an implicit belief in the wisdom, health, mystery, beauty of every process, every concrete object, every human or other existence, not only consider'd from the point of view of all, but of each.' His two final utterances are that 'really great poetry is always . . . the result of a national spirit, and not the privilege of a polish'd and select few'; and that 'the strongest and sweetest songs yet remain to be sung.'

Such are the views contained in the opening essay *A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads*, as he calls it; but there are many other essays in this fascinating volume, some on poets such as Burns and Lord Tennyson, for whom Walt Whitman has a profound admiration; some on old actors and singers, the elder Booth, Forrest, Alboni and Mario being his special favourites; others on the native Indians, on the Spanish element in American nationality, on Western slang, on the poetry of the Bible, and on Abraham Lincoln. But Walt Whitman is at his best when he is analysing his own work and making schemes

for the poetry of the future. Literature, to him, has a distinctly social aim. He seeks to build up the masses by 'building up grand individuals.' And yet literature itself must be preceded by noble forms of life. 'The best literature is always the result of something far greater than itself—not the hero but the portrait of the hero. Before there can be recorded history or poem there must be the transaction.' Certainly, in Walt Whitman's views there is a largeness of vision, a healthy sanity and a fine ethical purpose. He is not to be placed with the professional littérateurs of his country, Boston novelists, New York poets and the like. He stands apart, and the chief value of his work is in its prophecy, not in its performance. He has begun a prelude to larger themes. He is the herald to a new era. As a man he is the precursor of a fresh type. He is a factor in the heroic and spiritual evolution of the human being. If Poetry has passed him by, Philosophy will take note of him.

THE KALEVALA

THE EPIC POEM OF FINLAND

THE KALEVALA is one of those poems that Mr. William Morris once described as 'The Bibles of the World.' It takes its place as a national epic beside the Homeric poems, the Niebelunge, the Shahnameth and the Mahabharata, and the admirable translation just published by Mr. John Martin Crawford is sure to be welcomed by all scholars and lovers of primitive poetry. In his very interesting preface Mr. Crawford claims for the Finns that they began earlier than any other European nation to collect and preserve their ancient folklore. In the seventeenth century we meet men of literary tastes like Palmsköld who tried to collect and interpret the various national songs of the fen-dwellers of the North. But the *Kalevala* proper was collected by two great Finnish scholars of our own century, Zacharias Topelius and Elias Lönnrot. Both were practising physicians, and in this capacity came into frequent contact with the people of Finland. Tope-

lius, who collected eighty epical fragments of the *Kalevala*, spent the last eleven years of his life in bed, afflicted with a fatal disease. This misfortune, however, did not damp his enthusiasm. Mr. Crawford tells us that he used to invite the wandering Finnish merchants to his bedside and induce them to sing their heroic poems which he copied down as soon as they were uttered, and that whenever he heard of a renowned Finnish minstrel he did all in his power to bring the song-man to his house in order that he might gather new fragments of the national epic. Lönnrot travelled over the whole country, on horseback, in reindeer sledges and in canoes, collecting the old poems and songs from the hunters, the fishermen and the shepherds. The people gave him every assistance, and he had the good fortune to come across an old peasant, one of the oldest of the *runolainen* in the Russian province of Wuokinlem, who was by far the most renowned song-man of the country, and from him he got many of the most splendid runes of the poem. And certainly the *Kalevala*, as it stands, is one of the world's great poems. It is perhaps hardly accurate to describe it as an epic. It lacks the central unity of a true epic in our sense of the word. It has many heroes beside Wainomoinen and is, properly speaking, a collection of folk-songs and ballads. Of its antiquity there is no doubt. It is thoroughly pagan from beginning to end, and even the legend of the Virgin Mariatta to whom the Sun tells where 'her golden babe lies hidden'—

> Yonder is thy golden infant,
> There thy holy babe lies sleeping
> Hidden to his belt in water,
> Hidden in the reeds and rushes—

is, according to all scholars, essentially pre-Christian in origin. The gods are chiefly gods of air and water and forest. The highest is the sky-god Ukks who is 'The Father of the Breezes,' 'The Shepherd of the Lamb-Clouds'; the lightning is his sword, the rainbow is his bow; his skirt sparkles with fire, his stockings are blue and his shoes crimson-coloured. The daughters of the Sun and Moon sit on the scarlet rims of the clouds and weave the rays of light into a gleaming web. Untar presides over fogs and mists, and passes them through a silver sieve before sending them to the earth. Ahto, the wave-god, lives with 'his cold and cruel-hearted spouse,' Wellamo, at the bottom of the sea in the chasm of the Salmon-Rocks, and possesses the priceless treasure of the Sampo, the talisman of success. When the branches of the primitive oak-trees shut out the light of the sun from the Northland, Pikku-Mies (the Pygmy) emerged from the sea in a suit of copper, with a copper hatchet in his belt, and having grown to a giant's stature felled the huge oak with the third stroke of his axe. Wirokannas is 'The Green-robed Priest of the Forest,' and Tapio, who has a coat of tree-moss and a high-crowned hat of fir-leaves, is 'The Gracious God of the Woodlands.' Otso, the bear, is the 'Honey-Paw of the Mountains,' the 'Fur-robed Forest

Friend.' In everything, visible and invisible, there is God, a divine presence. There are three worlds, and they are all peopled with divinities.

As regards the poem itself, it is written in trochaic eight-syllable lines with alliteration and the part-line echo, the metre which Longfellow adopted for *Hiawatha*. One of its distinguishing characteristics is its wonderful passion for nature and for the beauty of natural objects. Lemenkainen says to Tapio:

> Sable-bearded God of forests,
> In thy hat and coat of ermine,
> Robe thy trees in finest fibres,
> Deck thy groves in richest fabrics,
> Give the fir-trees shining silver,
> Deck with gold the slender balsams,
> Give the spruces copper-belting,
> And the pine-trees silver girdles,
> Give the birches golden flowers,
> Deck their stems with silver fretwork,
> This their garb in former ages
> When the days and nights were brighter,
> When the fir-trees shone like sunlight,
> And the birches like the moonbeams;
> Honey breathe throughout the forest,
> Settled in the glens and highlands,
> Spices in the meadow-borders,
> Oil outpouring from the lowlands.

All handicrafts and art-work are, as in Homer, elaborately described:

> Then the smiter Ilmarinen
> The eternal artist-forgeman,
> In the furnace forged an eagle
> From the fire of ancient wisdom,

For this giant bird of magic
Forged he talons out of iron,
And his beak of steel and copper;
Seats himself upon the eagle,
On his back between the wing-bones
Thus addresses he his creature,
Gives the bird of fire this order.
Mighty eagle, bird of beauty,
Fly thou whither I direct thee,
To Tuoni's coal-black river,
To the blue-depths of the Death-stream,
Seize the mighty fish of Mana,
Catch for me this water-monster.

And Wainamoinen's boat-building is one of the great incidents of the poem:

Wainamoinen old and skilful,
The eternal wonder-worker,
Builds his vessel with enchantment,
Builds his boat by art and magic,
From the timber of the oak-tree,
Forms its posts and planks and flooring.
Sings a song and joins the framework;
Sings a second, sets the siding;
Sings a third time, sets the rowlocks;
Fashions oars, and ribs, and rudder,
Joins the sides and ribs together.

. . . . .

Now he decks his magic vessel,
Paints the boat in blue and scarlet,
Trims in gold the ship's forecastle,
Decks the prow in molten silver;
Sings his magic ship down gliding,
On the cylinders of fir-tree;
Now erects the masts of pine-wood,
On each mast the sails of linen,
Sails of blue, and white, and scarlet,
Woven into finest fabric.

All the characteristics of a splendid antique civilisation are mirrored in this marvellous poem, and Mr. Crawford's admirable translation should make the wonderful heroes of Suomi song as familiar if not as dear to our people as the heroes of the great Ionian epic.

POETICAL SOCIALISTS

MR. STOPFORD BROOKE said some time ago that Socialism and the socialistic spirit would give our poets nobler and loftier themes for song, would widen their sympathies and enlarge the horizon of their vision and would touch, with the fire and fervour of a new faith, lips that had else been silent, hearts that but for this fresh gospel had been cold. What Art gains from contemporary events is always a fascinating problem and a problem that is not easy to solve. It is, however, certain that Socialism starts well equipped. She has her poets and her painters, her art lecturers and her cunning designers, her powerful orators and her clever writers. If she fails it will not be for lack of expression. If she succeeds her triumph will not be a triumph of mere brute force. The first thing that strikes one, as one looks over the list of contributors to Mr. Edward Carpenter's *Chants of Labour*, is the curious variety of their several occupations, the wide differences of social position that exist be-

tween them, and the strange medley of men whom a common passion has for the moment united. The editor is a 'Science lecturer'; he is followed by a draper and a porter; then we have two late Eton masters and then two boot-makers; and these are, in their turn, succeeded by an ex-Lord Mayor of Dublin, a bookbinder, a photographer, a steel-worker and an authoress. On one page we have a journalist, a draughtsman and a music-teacher: and on another a Civil servant, a machine fitter, a medical student, a cabinet-maker and a minister of the Church of Scotland. Certainly, it is no ordinary movement that can bind together in close brotherhood men of such dissimilar pursuits, and when we mention that Mr. William Morris is one of the singers, and that Mr. Walter Crane has designed the cover and frontispiece of the book, we cannot but feel that, as we pointed out before, Socialism starts well equipped.

As for the songs themselves, some of them, to quote from the editor's preface, are 'purely revolutionary, others are Christian in tone; there are some that might be called merely material in their tendency, while many are of a highly ideal and visionary character.' This is, on the whole, very promising. It shows that Socialism is not going to allow herself to be trammelled by any hard and fast creed or to be stereotyped into an iron formula. She welcomes many and multiform natures. She rejects none and has room for all. She has the attraction of a wonderful personality and touches the heart of one and the brain of an-

other, and draws this man by his hatred of injustice, and his neighbour by his faith in the future, and a third, it may be, by his love of art or by his wild worship of a lost and buried past. And all of this is well. For, to make men Socialists is nothing, but to make Socialism human is a great thing.

They are not of any very high literary value, these poems that have been so dexterously set to music. They are meant to be sung, not to be read. They are rough, direct and vigorous, and the tunes are stirring and familiar. Indeed, almost any mob could warble them with ease. The transpositions that have been made are rather amusing. *'Twas in Trafalgar Square* is set to the tune of *'Twas in Trafalgar's Bay; Up, Ye People!* a very revolutionary song by Mr. John Gregory, boot-maker, with a refrain of

> Up, ye People! or down into your graves!
> Cowards ever will be slaves!

is to be sung to the tune of *Rule, Britannia!* the old melody of *The Vicar of Bray* is to accompany the new *Ballade of Law and Order*—which, however, is not a ballade at all—and to the air of *Here's to the Maiden of Bashful Fifteen* the democracy of the future is to thunder forth one of Mr. T. D. Sullivan's most powerful and pathetic lyrics. It is clear that the Socialists intend to carry on the musical education of the people simultaneously with their education in political science and, here as elsewhere, they seem to be entirely free from

any narrow bias or formal prejudice. Mendelssohn is followed by Moody and Sankey; the *Wacht am Rhein* stands side by side with the *Marseillaise; Lillibulero,* a chorus from *Norma, John Brown* and an air from Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* are all equally delightful to them. They sing the National Anthem in Shelley's version and chant William Morris's *Voice of Toil* to the flowing numbers of *Ye Banks and Braes of Bonny Doon.* Victor Hugo talks somewhere of the terrible cry of 'Le Tigre Populaire,' but it is evident from Mr. Carpenter's book that should the Revolution ever break out in England we shall have no inarticulate roar but, rather, pleasant glees and graceful part-songs. The change is certainly for the better. Nero fiddled while Rome was burning—at least, inaccurate historians say he did; but it is for the building up of an eternal city that the Socialists of our day are making music, and they have complete confidence in the art instincts of the people.

> They say that the people are brutal—
> That their instincts of beauty are dead—
> Were it so, shame on those who condemn them
> To the desperate struggle for bread.
> But they lie in their throats when they say it,
> For the people are tender at heart,
> And a wellspring of beauty lies hidden
> Beneath their life's fever and smart,

is a stanza from one of the poems in this volume, and the feeling expressed in these words is paramount everywhere. The Reformation gained

much from the use of popular hymn-tunes, and the Socialists seem determined to gain by similar means a similar hold upon the people. However, they must not be too sanguine about the result. The walls of Thebes rose up to the sound of music, and Thebes was a very dull city indeed.

GRACEFUL AND CHARMING VERSE

MISS NESBIT has already made herself a name as a writer of graceful and charming verse, and though her last volume, *Leaves of Life*, does not show any distinct advance on her former work, it still fully maintains the high standard already achieved, and justifies the reputation of the author. There are some wonderfully pretty poems in it, poems full of quick touches of fancy, and of pleasant ripples of rhyme; and here and there a poignant note of passion flashes across the song, as a scarlet thread flashes through the shuttlerace of a loom, giving a new value to the delicate tints, and bringing the scheme of colour to a higher and more perfect key. In Miss Nesbit's earlier volume, the *Lays and Legends*, as it was called, there was an attempt to give poetic form to humanitarian dreams and socialistic aspirations; but the poems that dealt with these subjects were, on the whole, the least successful of the collection; and with the quick, critical instinct of an artist,

Miss Nesbit seems to have recognised this. In the present volume, at any rate, such poems are rare, and these few felicitous verses give us the poet's defence:

A singer sings of rights and wrongs,
  Of world's ideals vast and bright,
And feels the impotence of songs
  To scourge the wrong or help the right;
And only writhes to feel how vain
  Are songs as weapons for his fight;
And so he turns to love again,
  And sings of love for heart's delight.

For heart's delight the singers bind
  The wreath of roses round the head,
And will not loose it lest they find
  Time victor, and the roses dead.
'Man can but sing of what he knows—
  I saw the roses fresh and red!'
And so they sing the deathless rose,
  With withered roses garlanded.

And some within their bosom hide
  Their rose of love still fresh and fair,
And walk in silence, satisfied
  To keep its folded fragrance rare.
And some—who bear a flag unfurled—
  Wreathe with their rose the flag they bear,
And sing their banner for the world,
  And for their heart the roses there.

Yet thus much choice in singing is;
  We sing the good, the true, the just,
Passionate duty turned to bliss,
  And honour growing out of trust.
Freedom we sing, and would not lose
  Her lightest footprint in life's dust.
We sing of her because we choose,
  We sing of love because we must.

Certainly Miss Nesbit is at her best when she sings of love and nature. Here she is close to her subject, and her temperament gives colour and form to the various dramatic moods that are either suggested by Nature herself or brought to Nature for interpretation. This, for instance, is very sweet and graceful:

When all the skies with snow were grey,
And all the earth with snow was white,
I wandered down a still wood way,
And there I met my heart's delight
Slow moving through the silent wood,
The spirit of its solitude:
The brown birds and the lichened tree
Seemed less a part of it than she.

Where pheasants' feet and rabbits' feet
Had marked the snow with traces small,
I saw the footprints of my sweet—
The sweetest woodland thing of all.
With Christmas roses in her hand,
One heart-beat's space I saw her stand;
And then I let her pass, and stood
Lone in an empty world of wood.

And though by that same path I've passed
Down that same woodland every day,
That meeting was the first and last,
And she is hopelessly away.
I wonder was she really there—
Her hands, and eyes, and lips, and hair?
Or was it but my dreaming sent
Her image down the way I went?

Empty the woods are where we met—
They will be empty in the spring;
The cowslip and the violet
Will die without her gathering.
But dare I dream one radiant day
Red rose-wreathed she will pass this way
Across the glad and honoured grass;
And then—I will not let her pass.

And this Dedication, with its tender silver-grey notes of colour, is charming:

In any meadow where your feet may tread,
  In any garland that your love may wear,
May be the flower whose hidden fragrance shed
  Wakes some old hope or numbs some old despair,
  And makes life's grief not quite so hard to bear,
And make's life's joy more poignant and more dear
Because of some delight dead many a year.

Or in some cottage garden there may be
  The flower whose scent is memory for you;
The sturdy southern-wood, the frail sweet-pea,
  Bring back the swallow's cheep, the pigeon's coo,
  And youth, and hope, and all the dreams they knew,
The evening star, the hedges grey with mist,
The silent porch where Love's first kiss was kissed.

So in my garden may you chance to find
  Or royal rose or quiet meadow flower,
Whose scent may be with some dear dream entwined
  And give you back the ghost of some sweet hour,
  As lilies fragrant from an August shower,
Or airs of June that over bean-fields blow,
Bring back the sweetness of my long ago.

All through the volume we find the same dexterous refining of old themes, which is indeed the best thing that our lesser singers can give us, and a thing always delightful. There is no garden so well tilled but it can bear another blossom, and though the subject-matter of Miss Nesbit's book is as the subject-matter of almost all books of

poetry, she can certainly lend a new grace and a subtle sweetness to almost everything on which she writes.

The Wanderings of Oisin and Other Poems is from the clever pen of Mr. W. B. Yeats, whose charming anthology of Irish fairy-tales I had occasion to notice in a recent number of the *Woman's World*. It is, I believe, the first volume of poems that Mr. Yeats has published, and it is certainly full of promise. It must be admitted that many of the poems are too fragmentary, too incomplete. They read like stray scenes out of unfinished plays, like things only half remembered, or, at best, but dimly seen. But the architectonic power of construction, the power to build up and make perfect a harmonious whole, is nearly always the latest, as it certainly is the highest, development of the artistic temperament. It is somewhat unfair to expect it in early work. One quality Mr. Yeats has in a marked degree, a quality that is not common in the work of our minor poets, and is therefore all the more welcome to us—I mean the romantic temper. He is essentially Celtic, and his verse, at its best, is Celtic also. Strongly influenced by Keats, he seems to study how to 'load every rift with ore,' yet is more fascinated by the beauty of words than by the beauty of metrical music. The spirit that dominates the whole book is perhaps more valuable than any individual poem or particular passage, but this from *The Wanderings of Oisin* is worth quoting. It describes the ride to the Island of Forgetfulness:

And the ears of the horse went sinking away in the hollow light,
For, as drift from a sailor slow drowning the gleams of the world and the sun,
Ceased on our hands and faces, on hazel and oak leaf, the light,
And the stars were blotted above us, and the whole of the world was one;

Till the horse gave a whinny; for cumbrous with stems of the hazel and oak,
Of hollies, and hazels, and oak-trees, a valley was sloping away
From his hoofs in the heavy grasses, with monstrous slumbering folk,
Their mighty and naked and gleaming bodies heaped loose where they lay.

More comely than man may make them, inlaid with silver and gold,
Were arrow and shield and war-axe, arrow and spear and blade,
And dew-blanched horns, in whose hollows a child of three years old
Could sleep on a couch of rushes, round and about them laid.

And this, which deals with the old legend of the city lying under the waters of a lake, is strange and interesting:

The maker of the stars and worlds
Sat underneath the market cross,
And the old men were walking, walking,
And little boys played pitch-and-toss.

'The props,' said He, 'of stars and worlds
Are prayers of patient men and good.'
The boys, the women, and old men,
Listening, upon their shadows stood.

A grey professor passing cried,
'How few the mind's intemperance rule!
What shallow thoughts about deep things!
The world grows old and plays the fool.'

The mayor came, leaning his left ear—
There were some talking of the poor—
And to himself cried, 'Communist!'
And hurried to the guardhouse door.

The bishop came with open book,
Whispering along the sunny path;
There was some talking of man's God,
His God of stupor and of wrath.

The bishop murmured, 'Atheist!
How sinfully the wicked scoff!'
And sent the old men on their way,
And drove the boys and women off

The place was empty now of people;
A cock came by upon his toes;
An old horse looked across the fence,
And rubbed along the rail his nose.

The maker of the stars and worlds
To His own house did Him betake,
And on that city dropped a tear,
And now that city is a lake.

Mr. Yeats has a great deal of invention, and some of the poems in his book, such as *Mosada*, *Jealousy*, and *The Island of Statues*, are very finely conceived. It is impossible to doubt, after reading his present volume, that he will some day give us work of high import. Up to this he has been merely trying the strings of his instrument, running over the keys.

THE HOUSE OF THE WOLFINGS

MR. MORRIS'S last book is a piece of pure art workmanship from beginning to end, and the very remoteness of its style from the common language and ordinary interests of our day gives to the whole story a strange beauty and an unfamiliar charm. It is written in blended prose and verse, like the mediæval 'cante-fable,' and tells the tale of the House of the Wolfings in its struggles against the legionaries of Rome then advancing into Northern Germany. It is a kind of Saga, and the language in which the folk-epic, as we may call it, is set forth recalls the antique dignity and directness of our English tongue four centuries ago. From an artistic point of view it may be described as an attempt to return by a self-conscious effort to the conditions of an earlier and a fresher age. Attempts of this kind are not uncommon in the history of art. From some such feeling came the Pre-Raphaelite movement of our own day and the archaistic movement of later Greek sculpture. When the result is beautiful

the method is justified, and no shrill insistence upon a supposed necessity for absolute modernity of form can prevail against the value of work that has the incomparable excellence of style. Certainly, Mr. Morris's work possesses this excellence. His fine harmonies and rich cadences create in the reader that spirit by which alone can its own spirit be interpreted, awake in him something of the temper of romance and, by taking him out of his own age, place him in a truer and more vital relation to the great masterpieces of all time. It is a bad thing for an age to be always looking in art for its own reflection. It is well that, now and then, we are given work that is nobly imaginative in its method and purely artistic in its aim. As we read Mr. Morris's story with its fine alternations of verse and prose, its decorative and descriptive beauties, its wonderful handling of romantic and adventurous themes we cannot but feel that we are as far removed from the ignoble fiction as we are from the ignoble facts of our own day. We breathe a purer air, and have dreams of a time when life had a kind of poetical quality of its own, and was simple and stately and complete.

The tragic interest of *The House of the Wolfings* centres round the figure of Thiodolf, the great hero of the tribe. The goddess who loves him gives him, as he goes to battle against the Romans, a magical hauberk on which rests this strange fate: that he who wears it shall save his own life and destroy the life of his land. Thiodolf, finding out

this secret, brings the hauberk back to the Wood-Sun, as she is called, and chooses death for himself rather than the ruin of his cause, and so the story ends.

But Mr. Morris has always preferred romance to tragedy, and set the development of action above the concentration of passion. His story is like some splendid old tapestry crowded with stately images and enriched with delicate and delightful detail. The impression it leaves on us is not of a single central figure dominating the whole, but rather of a magnificent design to which everything is subordinated, and by which everything becomes of enduring import. It is the whole presentation of the primitive life that really fascinates. What in other hands would have been mere archæology is here transformed by quick artistic instinct and made wonderful for us, and human and full of high interest. The ancient world seems to have come to life again for our pleasure.

Of a work so large and so coherent, completed with no less perfection than it is conceived, it is difficult by mere quotation to give any adequate idea. This, however, may serve as an example of its narrative power. The passage describes the visit of Thiodolf to the Wood-Sun:

> The moonlight lay in a great flood on the grass without, and the dew was falling in the coldest hour of the night, and the earth smelled sweetly: the whole habitation was asleep now, and there was no sound to be known as the sound of

any creature, save that from the distant meadow came the lowing of a cow that had lost her calf, and that a white owl was flitting about near the eaves of the Roof with her wild cry that sounded like the mocking of merriment now silent. Thiodolf turned toward the wood, and walked steadily through the scattered hazel-trees, and thereby into the thick of the beech-trees, whose boles grew smooth and silver-grey, high and close-set: and so on and on he went as one going by a well-known path, though there was no path, till all the moonlight was quenched under the close roof of the beech-leaves, though yet for all the darkness, no man could go there and not feel that the roof was green above him. Still he went on in despite of the darkness, till at last there was glimmer before him, that grew greater till he came unto a small wood lawn whereon the turf grew again, though the grass was but thin, because little sun light got to it, so close and thick were the tall trees round about it. . . . Nought looked Thiodolf either at the heavens above, or the trees, as he strode from off the husk-strewn floor of the beech wood on to the scanty grass of the lawn, but his eyes looked straight before him at that which was amidmost of the lawn: and little wonder was that; for there on a stone chair sat a woman exceeding fair, clad in glittering raiment, her hair lying as pale in the moonlight on the grey stone as the barley acres in the August night before the reaping-hook goes in amongst them. She sat there as though she were awaiting some one, and he made no stop nor stay, but went straight up to her, and took her in his arms, and kissed her mouth and her eyes, and she him again; and then he sat himself down beside her.

As an example of the beauty of the verse we would take this from the song of the Wood-Sun. It at least shows how perfectly the poetry harmonises with the prose, and how natural the transition is from the one to the other:

In many a stead Doom dwelleth, nor sleepeth day nor night:
The rim of the bowl she kisseth, and beareth the chambering light
When the kings of men wend happy to the bride-bed from the board.
It is little to say that she wendeth the edge of the grinded sword,
When about the house half builded she hangeth many a day;
The ship from the strand she shoveth, and on his wonted way
By the mountain hunter fareth where his foot ne'er failed before:
She is where the high bank crumbles at last on the river's shore:
The mower's scythe she whetteth; and lulleth the shepherd to sleep
Where the deadly ling-worm wakeneth in the desert of the sheep.
Now we that come of the God-kin of her redes for ourselves we wot,
But her will with the lives of men-folk and their ending know we not.
So therefore I bid thee not fear for thyself of Doom and her deed,
But for me: and I bid thee hearken to the helping of my need.
Or else—Art thou happy in life, or lusteth thou to die
In the flower of thy days, when thy glory and thy longing bloom on high?

The last chapter of the book in which we are told of the great feast made for the dead is so finely written that we cannot refrain from quoting this passage:

Now was the glooming falling upon the earth; but the Hall was bright within even as the Hall-Sun had promised.

Therein was set forth the Treasure of the Wolfings; fair cloths were hung on the walls, goodly broidered garments on the pillars: goodly brazen cauldrons and fair-carven chests were set down in nooks where men could see them well, and vessels of gold and silver were set all up and down the tables of the feast. The pillars also were wreathed with flowers, and flowers hung garlanded from the walls over the previous hangings; sweet gums and spices were burning in fair-wrought censers of brass, and so many candles were alight under the Roof, that scarce had it looked more ablaze when the Romans had litten the faggots therein for its burning amidst the hurry of the Morning Battle.

There then they fell to feasting, hallowing in the high-tide of their return with victory in their hands: and the dead corpses of Thiodolf and Otter, clad in precious glittering raiment, looked down on them from the High-seat, and the kindreds worshipped them and were glad; and they drank the Cup to them before any others, were they Gods or men.

In days of uncouth realism and unimaginative imitation, it is a high pleasure to welcome work of this kind. It is a work in which all lovers of literature cannot fail to delight.

AN AUSTRALIAN POET

A CRITIC recently remarked of Adam Lindsay Gordon that through him Australia had found her first fine utterance in song.* This, however, is an amiable error. There is very little of Australia in Gordon's poetry. His heart and mind and fancy were always preoccupied with memories and dreams of England and such culture as England gave him. He owed nothing to the land of his adoption. Had he stayed at home he would have done much better work. In a few poems such as *The Sick Stockrider*, *From the Wreck*, and *Wolf and Hound* there are notes of Australian influences, and these Swinburnian stanzas from the dedication to the *Bush Ballads* deserve to be

*See *Australian Poetry*, page 546

quoted, though the promise they hold out was never fulfilled:

They are rhymes rudely strung with intent less
  Of sound than of words,
In lands where bright blossoms are scentless,
  And songless bright birds;
Where, with fire and fierce drought on her tresses,
Insatiable summer oppresses
Sere woodlands and sad wildernesses,
  And faint flocks and herds.

Whence gather'd?—The locust's grand chirrup
  May furnish a stave;
The ring of a rowel and stirrup,
  The wash of a wave.
The chaunt of the marsh frog in rushes,
That chimes through the pauses and hushes
Of nightfall, the torrent that gushes,
  The tempests that rave.

In the gathering of night gloom o'erhead, in
  The still silent change,
All fire-flushed when forest trees redden
  On slopes of the range.
When the gnarl'd, knotted trunks Eucalyptian
Seem carved, like weird columns Egyptian,
With curious device—quaint inscription,
  And hieroglyph strange;

In the Spring, when the wattle gold trembles
  'Twixt shadow and shine,
When each dew-laden air draught resembles
  A long draught of wine;
When the sky-line's blue burnish'd resistance
Makes deeper the dreamiest distance,
Some song in all hearts hath existence,—
  Such songs have been mine.

As a rule, however, Gordon is distinctly English, and the landscapes he describes are always the landscapes of our own country. He writes about mediæval lords and ladies in his *Rhyme of Joyous Garde*, about Cavaliers and Roundheads in *The Romance of Britomarte*, and *Ashtaroth*, his longest and most ambitious poem, deals with the adventures of the Norman barons and Danish knights of ancient days. Steeped in Swinburne and bewildered with Browning, he set himself to reproduce the marvellous melody of the one and the dramatic vigour and harsh strength of the other. *From the Wreck* is a sort of Australian edition of the *Ride to Ghent*. These are the first three stanzas of one of the so-called *Bush Ballads:*

On skies still and starlit
  White lustres take hold,
And grey flashes scarlet,
  And red flashes gold.
And sun-glories cover
The rose, shed above her,
Like lover and lover
  They flame and unfold.

. . . .

Still bloom in the garden
  Green grass-plot, fresh lawn,
Though pasture lands harden
  And drought fissures yawn.
While leaves, not a few fall,
Let rose-leaves for you fall,
Leaves pearl-strung with dewfall,
  And gold shot with dawn.

Does the grass-plot remember
  The fall of your feet
In Autumn's red ember
  When drought leagues with heat,
When the last of the roses
Despairingly closes
In the lull that reposes
  Ere storm winds wax fleet?

And the following verses show that the Norman Baron of *Ashtaroth* had read *Dolores* just once too often:

Dead priests of Osiris, and Isis,
  And Apis! that mystical lore,
Like a nightmare, conceived in a crisis
  Of fever, is studied no more;
Dead Magian! yon star-troop that spangles
  The arch of yon firmament vast
Looks calm, like a host of white angels
  On dry dust of votaries past.

On seas unexplored can the ship shun
  Sunk rocks? Can man fathom life's links,
Past or future, unsolved by Egyptian
  Or Theban, unspoken by Sphynx?
The riddle remains yet, unravell'd
  By students consuming night oil.
O earth! we have toil'd, we have travailed:
  How long shall we travail and toil?

By the classics Gordon was always very much fascinated. He loved what he calls 'the scroll that is godlike and Greek,' though he is rather uncertain about his quantities, rhyming 'Polyxena' to 'Athena' and 'Aphrodite' to 'light,' and occasionally makes very rash statements, as when

he represents Leonidas exclaiming to the three hundred at Thermopylae:

> 'Ho! comrades let us gaily dine—
> This night with *Plato* we shall sup,'

if this be not, as we hope it is, a printer's error. What the Australians liked best were his spirited, if somewhat rough, horse-racing and hunting poems. Indeed, it was not till he found that *How We Beat the Favourite* was on everybody's lips that he consented to forego his anonymity and appear in the unsuspected character of a verse-writer, having up to that time produced his poems shyly, scribbled them on scraps of paper, and sent them unsigned to the local magazines. The fact is that the social atmosphere of Melbourne was not favourable to poets, and the worthy colonials seem to have shared Audrey's doubts as to whether poetry was a true and honest thing. It was not till Gordon won the Cup Steeplechase for Major Baker in 1868 that he became really popular, and probably there were many who felt that to steer Babbler to the winning-post was a finer achievement than 'to babble o'er green fields.'

On the whole, it is impossible not to regret that Gordon ever emigrated. His literary power cannot be denied, but it was stunted in uncongenial surroundings and marred by the rude life he was forced to lead. Australia has converted many of our failures into prosperous and admirable mediocrities, but she certainly spoiled one of our

poets for us. Ovid at Tomi is not more tragic than Gordon driving cattle or farming an unprofitable sheep-ranch.

That Australia, however, will some day make amends by producing a poet of her own we cannot doubt, and for him there will be new notes to sound and new wonders to tell of. The description, given by Mr. Marcus Clarke in the preface to this volume, of the aspect and spirit of Nature in Australia is most curious and suggestive. The Australian forests, he tells us, are funereal and stern, and 'seem to stifle, in their black gorges, a story of sullen despair.' No leaves fall from the trees, but 'from the melancholy gum strips of white bark hang and rustle. Great grey kangaroos hop noiselessly over the coarse grass. Flights of cockatoos stream out, shrieking like evil souls. The sun suddenly sinks and the mopokes burst out into horrible peals of semi-human laughter.' The aborigines aver that, when night comes, from the bottomless depth of some lagoon a misshapen monster rises, dragging his loathsome length along the ooze. From a corner of the silent forest rises a dismal chant, and around a fire dance natives painted like skeletons. All is fear-inspiring and gloomy. No bright fancies are linked with the memories of the mountains. Hopeless explorers have named them out of their sufferings—Mount Misery, Mount Dreadful, Mount Despair.

In Australia alone (says Mr. Clarke) is to be found the Grotesque, the Weird, the strange scribblings of nature

learning how to write. But the dweller in the wilderness acknowledges the subtle charm of the fantastic land of monstrosities. He becomes familiar with the beauty of loneliness. Whispered to by the myriad tongues of the wilderness, he learns the language of the barren and the uncouth, and can read the hieroglyphs of haggard gum-trees, blown into odd shapes, distorted with fierce hot winds, or cramped with cold nights, when the Southern Cross freezes in a cloudless sky of icy blue. The phantasmagoria of that wild dream-land termed the Bush interprets itself, and the Poet of our desolation begins to comprehend why free Esau loved his heritage of desert sand better than all the bountiful richness of Egypt.

Here, certainly, is new material for the poet, here is a land that is waiting for its singer. Such a singer Gordon was not. He remained thoroughly English, and the best that we can say of him is that he wrote imperfectly in Australia those poems that in England he might have made perfect.

WORDSWORTHIANA

'IN modern life,' said Matthew Arnold once, 'you cannot well enter a monastery; but you can enter the Wordsworth Society.' I fear that this will sound to many a somewhat uninviting description of this admirable and useful body, whose papers and productions have been recently published by Professor Knight, under the title of *Wordsworthiana*. 'Plain living and high thinking' are not popular ideals. Most people prefer to live in luxury, and to think with the majority. However, there is really nothing in the essays and addresses of the Wordsworth Society that need cause the public any unnecessary alarm; and it is gratifying to note that, although the society is still in the first blush of enthusiasm, it has not yet insisted upon our admiring Wordsworth's inferior work. It praises what is worthy of praise, reverences what should be reverenced, and explains what does not require explanation. One paper is quite delightful; it is from the pen of Mr. Rawnsley, and deals with such reminiscences

of Wordsworth as still linger among the peasantry of Westmoreland. Mr. Rawnsley grew up, he tells us, in the immediate vicinity of the present Poet-Laureate's old home in Lincolnshire, and had been struck with the swiftness with which,

> As year by year the labourer tills
> His wonted glebe, or lops the glades,

the memories of the poet of the Somersby Wold had 'faded from off the circle of the hills'—had, indeed, been astonished to note how little real interest was taken in him or his fame, and how seldom his works were met with in the houses of the rich or poor in the very neighbourhood. Accordingly, when he came to reside in the Lake Country, he endeavoured to find out what of Wordsworth's memory among the men of the Dales still lingered on—how far he was still a moving presence among them—how far his works had made their way into the cottages and farmhouses of the valleys. He also tried to discover how far the race of Westmoreland and Cumberland farm-folk—the 'Matthews' and the 'Michaels' of the poet, as described by him—were real or fancy pictures, or how far the characters of the Dalesmen had been altered in any remarkable manner by tourist influences during the thirty-two years that have passed since the Lake poet was laid to rest.

With regard to the latter point, it will be remembered that Mr. Ruskin, writing in 1876, said that 'the Border peasantry, painted with absolute

fidelity by Scott and Wordsworth,' are, as hitherto, a scarcely injured race; that in his fields at Coniston he had men who might have fought with Henry v. at Agincourt without being distinguished from any of his knights; that he could take his tradesmen's word for a thousand pounds, and need never latch his garden gate; and that he did not fear molestation, in wood or on moor, for his girl guests. Mr. Rawnsley, however, found that a certain beauty had vanished which the simple retirement of old valley days fifty years ago gave to the men among whom Wordsworth lived. 'The strangers,' he says, 'with their gifts of gold, their vulgarity, and their requirements, have much to answer for.' As for their impressions of Wordsworth, to understand them one must understand the vernacular of the Lake District. 'What was Mr. Wordsworth like in personal appearance?' said Mr. Rawnsley once to an old retainer, who still lives not far from Rydal Mount. 'He was a ugly-faäced man, and a meän liver,' was the answer; but all that was really meant was that he was a man of marked features, and led a very simple life in matters of food and raiment. Another old man, who believed that Wordsworth 'got most of his poetry out of Hartley,' spoke of the poet's wife as 'a very onpleasant woman, very onpleasant indeed. A close-fisted woman, that's what she was.' This, however, seems to have been merely a tribute to Mrs. Wordsworth's admirable housekeeping qualities.

The first person interviewed by Mr. Rawnsley was an old lady who had been once in service at Rydal Mount, and was, in 1870, a lodging-house keeper at Grasmere. She was not a very imaginative person, as may be gathered from the following anecdote:—Mr. Rawnsley's sister came in from a late evening walk, and said, 'O Mrs. D——, have you seen the wonderful sunset?' The good lady turned sharply round and, drawing herself to her full height, as if mortally offended, answered, 'No, miss; I'm a tidy cook, I know, and "they say" a decentish body for a landlady, but I don't knaw nothing about sunsets or them sort of things, they've never been in my line.' Her reminiscence of Wordsworth was as worthy of tradition as it was explanatory, from her point of view, of the method in which Wordsworth composed, and was helped in his labours by his enthusiastic sister. 'Well, you know,' she said, 'Mr. Wordsworth went humming and booing about, and she, Miss Dorothy, kept close behint him, and she picked up the bits as he let 'em fall, and tak' 'em down, and put 'em together on paper for him. And you may be very well sure as how she didn't understand nor make sense out of 'em, and I doubt that he didn't know much about them either himself, but, howivver, there's a great many folk as do, I dare say.' Of Wordsworth's habit of talking to himself, and composing aloud, we hear a great deal. 'Was Mr. Wordsworth a sociable man?' asked Mr. Rawnsley of a Rydal farmer. 'Wudsworth, for a' he

had noa pride nor nowt,' was the answer, 'was a man who was quite one to hissel, ye kna. He was not a man as folks could crack wi', nor not a man as could crack wi' folks. But there was another thing as kep' folk off, he had a ter'ble girt deep voice, and ye might see his faace agaan for long enuff. I've knoan folks, village lads and lasses, coming over by old road above, which runs from Grasmere to Rydal, flayt a'most to death there by Wishing Gaate to hear the girt voice a groanin' and mutterin' and thunderin' of a still evening. And he had a way of standin' quite still by the rock there in t' path under Rydal, and folks could hear sounds like a wild beast coming from the rocks, and childer were scared fit to be deäd a'most.'

Wordsworth's description of himself constantly recurs to one:

> And who is he with modest looks,
> And clad in sober russet gown?
> He murmurs by the running brooks,
> A music sweeter than their own;
> He is retired as noontide dew,
> Or fountain in a noonday grove.

But the corroboration comes in strange guise. Mr. Rawnsley asked one of the Dalesmen about Wordsworth's dress and habits. This was the reply: 'Wudsworth wore a Jem Crow, never seed him in a boxer in my life,—a Jem Crow and an old blue cloak was his rig, and *as for his habits, he had noan;* niver knew him with a pot i' his hand, or a pipe i' his mouth. But he was a greät

skater, for a' that—noan better in these parts—why, he could cut his own naäme upo' the ice, could Mr. Wudsworth.' Skating seems to have been Wordsworth's one form of amusement. He was 'over feckless i' his hands'—could not drive or ride—'not a bit of fish in him,' and 'nowt of a mountaineer.' But he could skate. The rapture of the time when, as a boy, on Esthwaite's frozen lake, he had

> wheeled about,
> Proud and exulting like an untired horse
> That cares not for his home, and, shod with steel,
> Had hissed along the polished ice,

was continued, Mr. Rawnsley tells us, into manhood's later day; and Mr. Rawnsley found many proofs that the skill the poet had gained, when

> Not seldom from the uproar he retired,
> Into a silent bay, or sportively
> Glanced sideway, leaving the tumultuous throng
> To cut across the reflex of a star,

was of such a kind as to astonish the natives among whom he dwelt. The recollection of a fall he once had, when his skate caught on a stone, still lingers in the district. A boy had been sent to sweep the snow from the White Moss Tarn for him. 'Did Mr. Wudsworth gie ye owt?' he was asked, when he returned from his labour. 'Na, but I seed him tumlle, though!' was the answer. 'He was a ter'ble girt skater, was Wudsworth now,' says one of Mr. Rawnsley's informants; 'he would put one hand i' his breast (he wore a

frill shirt i' them days), and t' other hand i' his wäistband, same as shepherds does to keep their hands warm, and he would stand up straight and sway and swing away grandly.'

Of his poetry they did not think much, and whatever was good in it they ascribed to his wife, his sister, and Hartley Coleridge. He wrote poetry, they said, 'because he couldn't help it—because it was his hobby'—for sheer love, and not for money. They could not understand his doing work 'for nowt,' and held his occupation in somewhat light esteem because it did not bring in 'a deal o' brass to the pocket.' 'Did you ever read his poetry, or see any books about in the farmhouses?' asked Mr. Rawnsley. The answer was curious: 'Ay, ay, time or two. But ya're weel aware there's potry and potry. There's potry wi' a li'le bit pleasant in it, and potry sic as a man can laugh at or the childer understand, and some as takes a deal of mastery to make out what's said, and a deal of Wudsworth's was this sort, ye kna. You could tell fra the man's faace his potry would niver have no laugh in it. His potry was quite different work from li'le Hartley. Hartley 'ud goa running along beside o' the brooks and mak his, and goa in the first oppen door and write what he had got upo' paper. But Wudsworth's potry was real hard stuff, and bided a deal of makking, and he'd keep it in his head for long enough. Eh, but it's queer, mon, different ways folks hes of making potry now. . . . Not but what Mr. Wudsworth didn't stand very high, and was

a well-spoken man enough.' The best criticism on Wordsworth that Mr. Rawnsley heard was this: 'He was an open-air man, and a great critic of trees.'

There are many useful and well-written essays in Professor Knight's volume, but Mr. Rawnsley's is far the most interesting of all. It gives us a graphic picture of the poet as he appeared in outward semblance and manner to those about whom he wrote.

It is always a pleasure to come across an American poet who is not national, and who tries to give expression to the literature that he loves rather than to the land in which he lives. The Muses care so little for geography! Mr. Richard Day's *Poems* have nothing distinctively American about them. Here and there in his verse one comes across a flower that does not bloom in our meadows, a bird to which our woodlands have never listened. But the spirit that animates the verse is simple and human, and there is hardly a poem in the volume that English lips might not have uttered. *Sounds of the Temple* has much in it that is interesting in metre as well as in matter:—

> Then sighed a poet from his soul:
> 'The clouds are blown across the stars,
> And chill have grown my lattice bars;
> I cannot keep my vigil whole
> By the lone candle of my soul.
>
> 'This reed had once devoutest tongue,
> And sang as if to its small throat
> God listened for a perfect note;
> As charily this lyre was strung:
> God's praise is slow and has no tongue.'

But the best poem is undoubtedly the *Hymn to the Mountain*:—

Within the hollow of thy hand—
  This wooded dell half up the height,
  Where streams take breath midway in flight—
Here let me stand.

Here warbles not a lowland bird,
  Here are no babbling tongues of men;
  Thy rivers rustling through the glen
Alone are heard.

Above no pinion cleaves its way,
  Save when the eagle's wing, as now,
  With sweep imperial shades thy brow
Beetling and grey.

What thoughts are thine, majestic peak?
  And moods that were not born to chime
  With poets' ineffectual rhyme
And numbers weak?

The green earth spreads thy gaze before,
  And the unfailing skies are brought
  Within the level of thy thought.
There is no more.

The stars salute thy rugged crown
  With syllables of twinkling fire;
  Like choral burst from distant choir,
Their psalm rolls down.

And I within this temple niche,
  Like statue set where prophets talk,
  Catch strains they murmur as they walk,
And I am rich.

A PSYCHOLOGICAL POEM

MISS CAROLINE FITZ GERALD'S volume of poems, *Venetia Victrix*, is dedicated to Mr. Robert Browning, and in the poem that gives its title to the book it is not difficult to see traces of Mr. Browning's influence. *Venetia Victrix* is a powerful psychological study of a man's soul, a vivid presentation of a terrible, fiery-coloured moment in a marred and incomplete life. It is sometimes complex and intricate in expression, but then the subject itself is intricate and complex. Plastic simplicity of outline may render for us the visible aspect of life; it is different when we come to deal with those secrets which self-consciousness alone contains, and which self-consciousness itself can but half reveal. Action takes place in the sunlight, but the soul works in the dark.

There is something curiously interesting in the marked tendency of modern poetry to become obscure. Many critics, writing with their eyes fixed on the masterpieces of past literature, have ascribed this tendency to wilfulness and to affecta-

tion. Its origin is rather to be found in the complexity of the new problems, and in the fact that self-consciousness is not yet adequate to explain the contents of the Ego. In Mr. Browning's poems, as in life itself which has suggested, or rather necessitated, the new method, thought seems to proceed not on logical lines, but on lines of passion. The unity of the individual is being expressed through its inconsistencies and its contradictions. In a strange twilight man is seeking for himself, and when he has found his own image, he cannot understand it. Objective forms of art, such as sculpture and the drama, sufficed one for the perfect presentation of life; they can no longer so suffice.

The central motive of Miss Caroline Fitz Gerald's psychological poem is the study of a man who to do a noble action wrecks his own soul, sells it to evil, and to the spirit of evil. Many martyrs have for a great cause sacrificed their physical life; the sacrifice of the spiritual life has a more poignant and a more tragic note. The story is supposed to be told by a French doctor, sitting at his window in Paris one evening:

> How far off Venice seems to-night! How dim
> The still-remembered sunsets, with the rim
> Of gold round the stone haloes, where they stand,
> Those carven saints, and look towards the land,
> Right Westward, perched on high, with palm in hand,
> Completing the peaked church-front. Oh how clear
> And dark against the evening splendour! Steer
> Between the graveyard island and the quay,
> Where North-winds dash the spray on Venice;—see

The rosy light behind dark dome and tower,
Or gaunt smoke-laden chimney;—mark the power
Of Nature's gentleness, in rise or fall
Of interlinkèd beauty, to recall
Earth's majesty in desecration's place,
Lending yon grimy pile that dream-like face
Of evening beauty;—note yon rugged cloud,
Red-rimmed and heavy, drooping like a shroud
Over Murano in the dying day.
I see it now as then—so far away!

The face of a boy in the street catches his eye. He seems to see in it some likeness to a dead friend. He begins to think, and at last remembers a hospital ward in Venice:

'Twas an April day,
The year Napoleon's troops took Venice—say
The twenty-fifth of April. All alone
Walking the ward, I heard a sick man moan,
In tones so piteous, as his heart would break:
'Lost, lost, and lost again—for Venice' sake!'
I turned. There lay a man no longer young,
Wasted with fever. I had marked, none hung
About his bed, as friends, with tenderness,
And, when the priest went by, he spared to bless,
Glancing perplexed—perhaps mere sullenness.
I stopped and questioned: 'What is lost, my friend?'
'My soul is lost, and now draws near the end.
My soul is surely lost. Send me no priest!
They sing and solemnise the marriage feast
Of man's salvation in the house of love,
And I in Hell, and God in Heaven above,
And Venice safe and fair on earth between—
No love of mine—mere service—for my Queen.'

He was a seaman, and the tale he tells the doctor before he dies is strange and not a little terri-

ble. Wild rage against a foster-brother who had bitterly wronged him, and who was one of the ten rulers over Venice, drives him to make a mad oath that on the day when he does anything for his country's good he will give his soul to Satan. That night he sails for Dalmatia, and as he is keeping the watch, he sees a phantom boat with seven fiends sailing to Venice:

> I heard the fiends' shrill cry: 'For Venice' good!
> Rival thine ancient foe in gratitude,
> Then come and make thy home with us in Hell!'
> I knew it must be so. I knew the spell
> Of Satan on my soul. I felt the power
> Granted by God to serve Him one last hour,
> Then fall for ever as the curse had wrought.
> I climbed aloft. My brain had grown one thought,
> One hope, one purpose. And I heard the hiss
> Of raging disappointment, loth to miss
> Its prey—I heard the lapping of the flame,
> That through the blanchèd figures went and came,
> Darting in frenzy to the devils' yell.
> I set that cross on high, and cried: 'To Hell
> My soul for ever, and my deed to God!
> Once Venice guarded safe, let this vile clod
> Drift where fate will.'
> And then (the hideous laugh
> Of fiends in full possession, keen to quaff
> The wine of one new soul not weak with tears,
> Pealing like ruinous thunder in mine ears)
> I fell, and heard no more. The pale day broke
> Through lazar-windows, when once more I woke,
> Remembering I might no more dare to pray.

The idea of the story is extremely powerful, and *Venetia Victrix* is certainly the best poem in the

volume—better than *Ophelion*, which is vague, and than *A Friar's Story*, which is pretty but ordinary. It shows that we have in Miss Fitz Gerald a new singer of considerable ability and vigour of mind, and it serves to remind us of the splendid dramatic possibilities extant in life, which are ready for poetry, and unsuitable for the stage. What is really dramatic is not necessarily that which is fitting for presentation in a theatre. The theatre is an accident of the dramatic form. It is not essential to it. We have been deluded by the name of action. To think is to act.

Of the shorter poems collected here, this *Hymn to Persephone* is, perhaps, the best:

Oh, fill my cup, Persephone,
With dim red wine of Spring,
And drop therein a faded leaf
Plucked from the Autumn's bearded sheaf,
Whence, dread one, I may quaff to thee,
While all the woodlands ring.

Oh, fill my heart, Persephone,
With thine immortal pain,
That lingers round the willow bowers
In memories of old happy hours,
When thou didst wander fair and free
O'er Enna's blooming plain.

Oh, fill my soul, Persephone,
With music all thine own!
Teach me some song thy childhood knew,
Lisped in the meadow's morning dew,
Or chant on this high windy lea,
Thy godhead's ceaseless moan.

But this *Venetian Song* also has a good deal of charm:

Leaning between carved stone and stone,
As glossy birds peer from a nest
Scooped in the crumbling trunk where rest
Their freckled eggs, I pause alone
And linger in the light awhile,
Waiting for joy to come to me—
Only the dawn beyond yon isle,
Only the sunlight on the sea.

I gaze—then turn and ply my loom,
Or broider blossoms close beside;
The morning world lies warm and wide,
But here is dim, cool silent gloom,
Gold crust and crimson velvet pile,
And not one face to smile on me—
Only the dawn beyond yon isle,
Only the sunlight on the sea.

Over the world the splendours break
Of morning light and noontide glow,
And when the broad red sun sinks low,
And in the wave long shadows shake,
Youths, maidens, glad with song and wile,
Glide and are gone, and leave with me
Only the dawn beyond yon isle,
Only the sunlight on the sea.

DELICATE SONNETS

THE BIRD-BRIDE, by Graham R. Tomson, is a collection of romantic ballads, delicate sonnets, and metrical studies in foreign fanciful forms. The poem that gives its title to the book is the lament of an Eskimo hunter over the loss of his wife and children.

Years agone, on the flat white strand,
I won my sweet sea-girl:
Wrapped in my coat of the snow-white fur,
I watched the wild birds settle and stir,
The grey gulls gather and whirl.

One, the greatest of all the flock,
Perched on an ice-floe bare,
Called and cried as her heart were broke,
And straight they were changed, that fleet bird-folk,
To women young and fair.

Swift I sprang from my hiding-place
And held the fairest fast;
I held her fast, the sweet, strange thing:
Her comrades skirled, but they all took wing,
And smote me as they passed.

I bore her safe to my warm snow house;
Full sweetly there she smiled;
And yet, whenever the shrill winds blew,
She would beat her long white arms anew,
And her eyes glanced quick and wild.

But I took her to wife, and clothed her warm
With skins of the gleaming seal;
Her wandering glances sank to rest
When she held a babe to her fair, warm breast,
And she loved me dear and leal.

Together we tracked the fox and the seal,
And at her behest I swore
That bird and beast my bow might slay
For meat and for raiment, day by day,
But never a grey gull more.

Famine comes upon the land, and the hunter, forgetting his oath, slays four sea-gulls for food. The bird-wife 'shrilled out in a woful cry,' and taking the plumage of the dead birds, she makes wings for her children and for herself, and flies away with them.

'Babes of mine, of the wild wind's kin,
Feather ye quick, nor stay.
Oh, oho! but the wild winds blow!
Babes of mine, it is time to go:
Up, dear hearts, and away!'

And lo! the grey plumes covered them all,
Shoulder and breast and brow.
I felt the wind of their whirling flight:
Was it sea or sky? was it day or night?
It is always night-time now.

Dear, will you never relent, come back?
I loved you long and true.
O winged white wife, and our children three,
Of the wild wind's kin though you surely be,
Are ye not of my kin too?

Ay, ye once were mine, and, till I forget,
Ye are mine forever and aye.
Mine, wherever your wild wings go,
While shrill winds whistle across the snow
And the skies are blear and grey.

Some powerful and strong ballads follow, many of which, such as *The Cruel Priest*, *Deid Folks' Ferry*, and *Märchen*, are in that curious combination of Scotch and Border dialect so much affected now by our modern poets. Certainly dialect is dramatic. It is a vivid method of re-creating a past that never existed. It is something between 'A Return to Nature' and 'A Return to the Glossary.' It is so artificial that it is really naïve. From the point of view of mere music, much may be said for it. Wonderful diminutives lend new notes of tenderness to the song. There are possibilities of fresh rhymes, and in search for a fresh rhyme poets may be excused if they wander from the broad highroad and less-trodden paths. Sometimes one is tempted to look on dialect as expressing simply the pathos of provincialisms, but there is more in it than mere mispronunciations. With the revival of an antique form, often comes the revival of an antique spirit. Through limitations that are sometimes uncouth, and always narrow, comes Tragedy herself; and though

she may stammer in her utterance, and deck herself in cast-off weeds and trammelling raiment, still we must hold ourselves in readiness to accept her, so rare are her visits to us now, so rare her presence in an age that demands a happy ending from every play, and that sees in the theatre merely a source of amusement. The form, too, of the ballad—how perfect it is in its dramatic unity! It is so perfect that we must forgive it its dialect, if it happens to speak in that strange tongue.

Then by cam' the bride's company
  Wi' torches burning bright.
'Tak' up, tak' up your bonny bride
  A' in the mirk midnight!'

Oh, wan, wan was the bridegroom's face
  And wan, wan was the bride,
But clay-cauld was the young mess-priest
  That stood them twa beside!

Says, 'Rax me out your hand, Sir Knight,
  And wed her wi' this ring';
And the deid bride's hand it was as cauld
  As ony earthly thing.

The priest he touched that lady's hand,
  And never a word he said;
The priest he touched that lady's hand,
  And his ain was wet and red.

The priest he lifted his ain right hand,
  And the red blood dripped and fell.
Says, 'I loved ye, lady, and ye loved me;
  Sae I took your life mysel'.'

. . . . . .

Oh! red, red was the dawn o' day,
  And tall was the gallows-tree:
The Southland lord to his ain has fled
  And the mess-priest's hangit hie!

Of the sonnets, this *To Herodotus* is worth quoting:

Far-travelled coaster of the midland seas,
What marvels did those curious eyes behold!
Winged snakes, and carven labyrinths of old;
The emerald column raised to Heracles;
King Perseus' shrine upon the Chemmian leas;
Four-footed fishes, decked with gems and gold:
But thou didst leave some secrets yet untold,
And veiled the dread Osirian mysteries.

And now the golden asphodels among
Thy footsteps fare, and to the lordly dead
Thou tellest all the stories left unsaid
Of secret rites and runes forgotten long,
Of that dark folk who ate the Lotus-bread
And sang the melancholy Linus-song.

Mrs. Tomson has certainly a very refined sense of form. Her verse, especially in the series entitled *New Words to Old Tunes*, has grace and distinction. Some of the shorter poems are, to use a phrase made classical by Mr. Pater, 'little carved ivories of speech.' She is one of our most artistic workers in poetry, and treats language as a fine material.

ROMANTIC POEMS AND BALLADS

MR. SWINBURNE once set his age on fire by a volume of very perfect and very poisonous poetry. Then he became revolutionary and pantheistic, and cried out against those that sit in high places both in heaven and on earth. Then he invented Marie Stuart and laid upon us the heavy burden of *Bothwell*. Then he retired to the nursery and wrote poems about children of a somewhat over-subtle character. He is now extremely patriotic, and manages to combine with his patriotism a strong affection for the Tory party. He has always been a great poet. But he has his limitations, the chief of which is, curiously enough, the entire lack of any sense of limit. His song is nearly always too loud for his subject. His magnificent rhetoric, nowhere more magnificent than in the volume that now lies before us, conceals rather than reveals. It has been said of him, and with truth, that he is a master of language, but with still greater truth it may be said that Language is his

master. Words seem to dominate him. Alliteration tyrannises over him. Mere sound often becomes his lord. He is so eloquent that whatever he touches becomes unreal.

Let us turn to the poem on the Armada:

The wings of the south-west wind are widened; the breath
of his fervent lips,
More keen than a sword's edge, fiercer than fire, falls full
on the plunging ships.
The pilot is he of the northward flight, their stay and their
steersman he;
A helmsman clothed with the tempest, and girdled with
strength to constrain the sea.
And the host of them trembles and quails, caught fast in
his hand as a bird in the toils;
For the wrath and the joy that fulfil him are mightier
than man's, whom he slays and spoils.
And vainly, with heart divided in sunder, and labour of
wavering will,
The lord of their host takes counsel with hope if haply their
star shine still.

Somehow we seem to have heard all this before. Does it come from the fact that of all the poets who ever lived Mr. Swinburne is the one who is the most limited in imagery? It must be admitted that he is so. He has wearied us with his monotony. 'Fire' and the 'Sea' are the two words ever on his lips. We must confess also that this shrill singing—marvellous as it is—leaves us out of breath. Here is a passage from a poem called *A Word with the Wind:*

Be the sunshine bared or veiled, the sky superb or shrouded,
Still the waters, lax and languid, chafed and foiled,
Keen and thwarted, pale and patient, clothed with fire or clouded,
Vex their heart in vain, or sleep like serpents coiled.
Thee they look for, blind and baffled, wan with wrath and weary,
Blown for ever back by winds that rock the bird:
Winds that seamews breast subdue the sea, and bid the dreary
Waves be weak as hearts made sick with hope deferred.
Let the clarion sound from westward, let the south bear token
How the glories of thy godhead sound and shine:
Bid the land rejoice to see the land-wind's broad wings broken,
Bid the sea take comfort, bid the world be thine.

Verse of this kind may be justly praised for the sustained strength and vigour of its metrical scheme. Its purely technical excellence is extraordinary. But is it more than an oratorical *tour de force*? Does it really convey much? Does it charm? Could we return to it again and again with renewed pleasure? We think not. It seems to us empty.

Of course, we must not look to these poems for any revelation of human life. To be at one with the elements seems to be Mr. Swinburne's aim. He seeks to speak with the breath of wind and wave. The roar of the fire is ever in his ears. He puts his clarion to the lips of Spring and bids her blow, and the Earth wakes from her dreams and tells him her secret. He is the first lyric poet who has tried to make an absolute surrender

of his own personality, and he has succeeded. We hear the song, but we never know the singer. We never even get near to him. Out of the thunder and splendour of words he himself says nothing. We have often had man's interpretation of Nature; now we have Nature's interpretation of man, and she has curiously little to say. Force and Freedom form her vague message. She deafens us with her clangours.

But Mr. Swinburne is not always riding the whirlwind and calling out of the depths of the sea. Romantic ballads in Border dialect have not lost their fascination for him, and this last volume contains some very splendid examples of this curious artificial kind of poetry. The amount of pleasure one gets out of dialect is a matter entirely of temperament. To say 'mither' instead of 'mother' seems to many the acme of romance. There are others who are not quite so ready to believe in the pathos of provincialisms. There is, however, no doubt of Mr. Swinburne's mastery over the form, whether the form be quite legitimate or not. *The Weary Wedding* has the concentration and colour of a great drama, and the quaintness of its style lends it something of the power of a grotesque. The ballad of *The Witch-Mother*, a mediæval Medea who slays her children because her lord is faithless, is worth reading on account of its horrible simplicity. *The Bride's Tragedy*, with its strange refrain of

> In, in, out and in,
> Blaws the wind and whirls the whin:

The *Jacobite's Exile*—

> O lordly flow the Loire and Seine,
> And loud the dark Durance:
> But bonnier shine the braes of Tyne
> Than a' the fields of France;
> And the waves of Till that speak sae still
> Gleam goodlier where they glance:

The Tyneside Widow and *A Reiver's Neck-verse* are all poems of fine imaginative power, and some of them are terrible in their fierce intensity of passion. There is no danger of English poetry narrowing itself to a form so limited as the romantic ballad in dialect. It is of too vital a growth for that. So we may welcome Mr. Swinburne's masterly experiments with the hope that things which are inimitable will not be imitated. The collection is completed by a few poems on children, some sonnets, a threnody on John William Inchbold, and a lovely lyric entitled *The Interpreters*.

> In human thought have all things habitation;
> Our days
> Laugh, lower, and lighten past, and find no station
> That stays.
>
> But thought and faith are mightier things than time
> Can wrong,
> Made splendid once by speech, or made sublime
> By song.
>
> Remembrance, though the tide of change that rolls
> Wax hoary,
> Gives earth and heaven, for song's sake and the soul's,
> Their glory.

Certainly, 'for song's sake' we should love Mr. Swinburne's work, cannot, indeed, help loving it, so marvellous a music-maker is he. But what of the soul? For the soul we must go elsewhere.

WANDERINGS OF OISIN

BOOKS of poetry by young writers are usually promissory notes that are never met. Now and then, however, one comes across a volume that is so far above the average that one can hardly resist the fascinating temptation of recklessly prophesying a fine future for its author. Such a book Mr. Yeats's *Wanderings of Oisin* certainly is. Here we find nobility of treatment and nobility of subject-matter, delicacy of poetic instinct and richness of imaginative resource. Unequal and uneven much of the work must be admitted to be. Mr. Yeats does not try to 'out-baby' Wordsworth, we are glad to say; but he occasionally succeeds in 'out-glittering' Keats, and, here and there, in his book we come across strange crudities and irritating conceits. But when he is at his best he is very good. If he has not the grand simplicity of epic treatment, he has at least something of the largeness of vision that belongs to the epical temper. He does not rob of their stature the great heroes of Celtic

mythology. He is very naïve and very primitive and speaks of his giants with the air of a child. Here is a characteristic passage from the account of Oisin's return from the Island of Forgetfulness:

And I rode by the plains of the sea's edge, where all is barren and grey,
Grey sands on the green of the grasses and over the dripping trees,
Dripping and doubling landward, as though they would hasten away
Like an army of old men longing for rest from the moan of the seas.

Long fled the foam-flakes around me, the winds fled out of the vast,
Snatching the bird in secret, nor knew I, embosomed apart,
When they froze the cloth on my body like armour riveted fast,
For Remembrance, lifting her leanness, keened in the gates of my heart.

Till fattening the winds of the morning, an odour of new-mown hay
Came, and my forehead fell low, and my tears like berries fell down;
Later a sound came, half lost in the sound of a shore far away,
From the great grass-barnacle calling, and later the shore-winds brown.

If I were as I once was, the gold hooves crushing the sand and the shells,
Coming forth from the sea like the morning with red lips murmuring a song,
Not coughing, my head on my knees, and praying, and wroth with the bells,
I would leave no Saint's head on his body, though spacious his lands were and strong.

Making way from the kindling surges, I rode on a bridle-path,
Much wondering to see upon all hands, of wattle and woodwork made,
Thy bell-mounted churches, and guardless the sacred cairn and the earth,
And a small and feeble populace stooping with mattock and spade.

In one or two places the music is faulty, the construction is sometimes too involved, and the word 'populace' in the last line is rather infelicitous; but, when all is said, it is impossible not to feel in these stanzas the presence of the true poetic spirit.

VOLUMES IN FOLIO

MR. RICHARD LE GALLIENNE'S little book, *Volumes in Folio* as he quaintly calls it, is full of dainty verse and delicate fancy. Lines such as

> And lo! the white face of the dawn
> Yearned like a ghost's against the pane,
> A sobbing ghost amid the rain;
> Or like a chill and pallid rose
> Slowly upclimbing from the lawn,

strike, with their fantastic choice of metaphors, a pleasing note. At present Mr. Le Gallienne's muse seems to devote herself entirely to the worship of books, and Mr. Le Gallienne himself is steeped in literary traditions, making Keats his model and seeking to reproduce something of Keats's richness and affluence of imagery. He is keenly conscious how derivative his inspiration is:

Verse of my own! why ask so poor a thing,
When I might gather from the garden-ways
Of sunny memory fragrant offering
Of deathless blooms and white unwithering sprays?

Shakspeare had given me an English rose,
And honeysuckle Spenser sweet as dew,
Or I had brought you from that dreamy close
Keats' passion-blossom, or the mystic blue

Star-flower of Shelley's song, or shaken gold
From lilies of the Blessed Damosel,
Or stolen fire from out the scarlet fold
Of Swinburne's poppies. . . .

Yet now that he has played his prelude with so sensitive and so graceful a touch, we have no doubt that he will pass to larger themes and nobler subject-matter, and fulfil the hope he expresses in this sextet:

For if perchance some music should be mine,
I would fling forth its notes like a fierce sea,
To wash away the piles of tyranny,
To make love free and faith unbound of creed.
O for some power to fill my shrunken line,
And make a trumpet of my oaten reed.

PRIMAVERA

IN the summer term Oxford teaches the exquisite art of idleness, one of the most important things that any University can teach, and possibly as the first-fruits of the dreaming in grey cloister and silent garden, which either makes or mars a man, there has just appeared in that lovely city a dainty and delightful volume of poems by four friends. These new young singers are Mr. Laurence Binyon, who has just gained the Newdigate; Mr. Manmohan Ghose, a young Indian of brilliant scholarship and high literary attainments who gives some culture to Christ Church; Mr. Stephen Phillips, whose recent performance of the Ghost in *Hamlet* at the Globe Theatre was so admirable in its dignity and elocution; and Mr. Arthur Cripps, of Trinity. Particular interest attaches naturally to Mr. Ghose's work. Born in India, of purely Indian parentage, he has been brought up entirely in England, and was educated at St. Paul's School, and his verses show us how quick and subtle

are the intellectual sympathies of the Oriental mind, and suggest how close is the bond of union that may some day bind India to us by other methods than those of commerce and military strength.

There is something charming in finding a young Indian using our language with such care for music and words as Mr. Ghose does. Here is one of his songs:

Over thy head, in joyful wanderings
Through heaven's wide spaces, free,
Birds fly with music in their wings;
And from the blue, rough sea
The fishes flash and leap;
There is a life of loveliest things
O'er thee, so fast asleep.

In the deep West the heavens grow heavenlier,
Eve after eve; *and still*
The glorious stars remember to appear;
The roses on the hill
Are fragrant as before:
Only thy face, of all that's dear,
I shall see nevermore!

It has its faults. It has a great many faults. But the lines we have set in italics are lovely. The temper of Keats, the moods of Matthew Arnold, have influenced Mr. Ghose, and what better influence could a beginner have? Here are some stanzas from another of Mr. Ghose's poems:

Deep-shaded will I lie, and deeper yet
In night, where not a leaf its neighbour knows;
Forget the shining of the stars, forget
The vernal visitation of the rose;
And, far from all delights, prepare my heart's repose.

'O crave not silence thou! too soon, too sure,
Shall Autumn come, and through these branches weep:
Some birds shall cease, and flowers no more endure;
And thou beneath the mould unwilling creep,
And silent soon shalt be in that eternal sleep.

'Green still it is, where that fair goddess strays;
Then follow, till around thee all be sere.
Lose not a vision of her passing face;
Nor miss the sound of her soft robes, that here
Sweep over the wet leaves of the fast-falling year.'

The second line is very beautiful, and the whole shows culture and taste and feeling. Mr. Ghose ought some day to make a name in our literature.

Mr. Stephen Phillips has a more solemn classical Muse. His best work is his *Orestes:*

Me in far lands did Justice call, cold queen
Among the dead, who, after heat and haste
At length have leisure for her steadfast voice,
That gathers peace from the great deeps of hell.
She call'd me, saying: I heard a cry by night!
Go thou, and question not; within thy halls
My will awaits fulfilment.

. . . . .

> And she lies there,
> My mother! ay, my mother now; O hair
> That once I play'd with in these halls! O eyes
> That for a moment knew me as I came,
> And lighten'd up, and trembled into love;
> The next were darkened by my hand! Ah me!
> Ye will not look upon me in that world.
> Yet thou, perchance, art happier, if thou go'st
> Into some land of wind and drifting leaves,
> To sleep without a star; but as for me,
> Hell hungers, and the restless Furies wait.

Milton, and the method of Greek tragedy are Mr. Phillips's influences, and again we may say, what better influences could a young singer have? His verse is dignified, and has distinction.

Mr. Cripps is melodious at times, and Mr. Binyon, Oxford's latest Laureate, shows us in his lyrical ode on *Youth* that he can handle a difficult metre dexterously, and in this sonnet that he can catch the sweet echoes that sleep in the sonnets of Shakespeare:

> I cannot raise my eyelids up from sleep,
> But I am visited with thoughts of you;
> Slumber has no refreshments half so deep
> As the sweet morn, that wakes my heart anew.
>
> I cannot put away life's trivial care,
> But you straightway steal on me with delight:
> My purest moments are your mirror fair;
> My deepest thought finds you the truth most bright.
>
> You are the lovely regent of my mind,
> The constant sky to the unresting sea;
> Yet, since 'tis you that rule me, I but find
> A finer freedom in such tyranny.
>
> Were the world's anxious kingdoms govern'd so,
> Lost were their wrongs, and vanish'd half their woe!

On the whole *Primavera* is a pleasant little book, and we are glad to welcome it. It is charmingly 'got up,' and undergraduates might read it with advantage during lecture hours.

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